DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 429 520 HE 032 012

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TITLE Benchmarking Assessment. Assessment of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and Public Accountability: State Governing, Coordinating Board & Regional Accreditation Association Policies and Practices.
INSTITUTION National Center for Postsecondary Improvement, Stanford, CA.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 1997-00-00
NOTE 209p.
CONTRACT R309A60001
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC09 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Accreditation (Institutions); *Accrediting Agencies; Benchmarking; *College Outcomes Assessment; *Educational Assessment; *Educational Policy; Educational Practices; Educational Quality; Government School Relationship; Higher Education; *State Standards

ABSTRACT

This report presents first-year results of a multistage research study that examines the progress made during the past decade by the 50 states and six regional accrediting associations toward establishing and implementing higher education teaching and learning assessment policies. The report provides a history of state and regional assessment policy development, a review of the published and unpublished findings of prior research, and an analysis of the status of assessment policies and practices across the 50 states and six regional accrediting associations. Each state and each regional accreditation policy related to outcomes assessment is examined within a policy analytic framework that describes the policy and presents its major components. Three themes emanating from the patterns and trends in the state analyses are discussed: the extent and implications of state use of common assessment practices, the relationship between state assessment policies and governance structures, and the use of incentives and consequences in assessment policies. For the accreditation associations, the issues identified include: the nature of the assessment of student learning and teaching effectiveness, the influence of institutional autonomy on policy formation and implementation, and the relationship between state and accreditation assessment policies and practices. The policy analysis for each state and accreditation association is appended. (Contains 38 references.) (DB)

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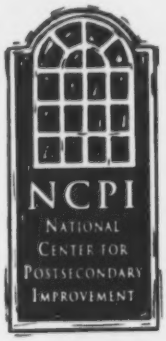

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The work reported herein was supported in part by the Educational Research and Development Center program, agreement number R309A60001, CFDA 84.309A, as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. The findings and opinions expressed in the report do not reflect the position or policies of OERI or the U.S. Department of Education.

BENCHMARKING ASSESSMENT

Assessment of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education for Improvement & Public Accountability: State Governing, Coordinating Board & Regional Accreditation Association Policies and Practices

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the first results of a multistage research process by the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI) that aims to understand and present the progress that has been made by the 50 states and six regional accrediting associations during the past decade toward establishing and implementing higher education assessment policies. The primary interest of NCPI is in policies and practices that seek to improve teaching and learning in the nation's colleges and universities. While this first report focuses upon policies adopted by the 50 states and the six regional accrediting associations to assess teaching and learning, it also includes the broader outcomes assessment policies of the states and six regional accrediting associations. Examining both the emphases on teaching and learning and other aspects of colleges and universities helps reveal the priorities that state policymakers and regional accrediting associations are giving to teaching and learning compared to other components of colleges and universities.

In this first stage, during the first year of NCPI, the researchers reviewed the literature of prior research on state assessment and regional accreditation policies, examined policy documents of each state, examined the policy and standards documents of the six regional accrediting associations, and discussed the policies and procedures with state higher education governance and regional accreditation officers. Reactions from state higher education and regional accreditation officers to the draft reports prepared by the NCPI researchers about their state or accrediting association were requested. This final report has been reviewed by Pat Callan of the Higher Education Policy Institute in California and Peter Ewell of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

The primary purpose of the first year's research and this report is to describe the various assessment policies and practices of each state, and of the six regional accreditation associations, to provide the basis for interstate and inter-association comparative analysis, to note emergent themes, and to lay the groundwork on which subsequent years of research will be built.

The information presented in this report includes a brief history of state and regional assessment policy development, a review of the published and unpublished findings of prior research, and an analysis of the status of assessment policies and practices across the 50 states and six regional accrediting associations. Each state policy and each regional accreditation policy related to college and university outcomes assessment is presented within a policy analytic framework that describes the policy and presents its major components.

Thirteen tables are presented, illustrating the current status and a comparative analysis of state and accreditation association assessment policies and practices. Three themes emanating from the patterns and trends in the state analysis are discussed: the extent and implications of state use of common assessment practices, the relationships between state assessment policies and governance structures, and the use of incentives and consequences in assessment policies. For the accreditation associations, the issues include: the nature of the assessment of student learning and teaching effectiveness, the influence of institutional autonomy on policy formation and implementation and the relationship between state and accreditation assessment policies and practices.

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BENCHMARKING ASSESSMENT

Assessment of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education for Improvement and Public Accountability: State Governing, Coordinating Board & Regional Accreditation Association Policies and Practices

The Background

For nearly two decades, the establishment of strategies for assessing college outcomes has concerned educators, policymakers and accrediting agencies alike. At the state level this search for appropriate policy and measurement mechanisms has involved leading policymakers and the leaders of public colleges and universities. For about the same time, leaders of regional accreditation associations have also sought ways to cause colleges and universities to assess the outcomes of college. The extent to which each state and regional accrediting association has succeeded in both establishing good policies and constructing useful measurement strategies are matters in need of exploration.

NCPI objectives

This report presents the first results of a multistage research process by the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI) that aims to explore the progress that has been made by the 50 states and six regional accrediting associations during the past decade toward establishing and implementing higher education assessment policies. The primary interest of NCPI is in policies and practices that seek to improve teaching and learning in the nation's colleges and universities. While this first report focuses upon policies adopted by the 50 states and the six regional accrediting associations to assess teaching and learning, it also includes the broader outcomes assessment policies of the states anD regional accrediting associations. Examining both the emphases on teaching and learning and other aspects of colleges and universities helps reveal the priorities that state policymakers and regional accrediting associations are giving to teaching and learning, compared to other components of colleges and universities.

This contribution

This report presents the results of the first of four stages of research to be conducted from 1996 through 2001. This first report investigates how various assessment policies and practices relate to teaching and learning. In this first stage, during the first year of NCPI, the researchers reviewed the literature of prior research on state assessment and regional accreditation policies, examined policy documents of each of the 50 states, examined the policy and standards documents of the regional accrediting associations, discussed the policies and procedures with state higher education governance and regional accreditation officers, and requested reactions from state higher education and regional accreditation officers to the draft reports prepared by NCPI researchers about their state or accrediting association.

Report contents

The information presented in this report includes a brief history of the state and regional assessment policy development, a review of the published and unpublished findings of prior research, an analysis of the status of assessment policies and practices across the 50 states and six regional accrediting associations, and a review of the published standards, criteria and guidelines of the regional accreditation associations and the policy documents of the state higher education agencies in each state.

Report structure

A historical overview
Review of research
State comparisons
Policy analyses

This report contains the following four features:

- first, it presents a brief historical overview of the assessment policies and practices of regional accrediting associations and the states;
- second, it presents a review of the past research dealing with state and regional accreditation policies and practices on outcomes assessment in higher education;
- third, it presents a comparison and contrast of the assessment policies of the regional accreditation associations and the 50 states;
- and fourth, it presents each state policy and each regional accreditation policy related to college and university outcomes assessment within a policy analytic framework that describes the policy and presents its major components.

Why assessment?

Rationale included:
accountability
evidence of quality
strengths/limitations
greater efficiencies
criteria identification
new competitiveness

The rationale offered by accreditation associations and the states for adopting assessment practices has varied, but there are some common themes/phrases that emerge across the nation, including the following:

- increasing public accountability to taxpayers whose taxes provide the largest single source of funding for colleges and universities;
- ensuring quality to citizens by providing concrete evidence about the instructional performance of the colleges and universities that they are considering attending or otherwise supporting;
- identifying strengths and limitations of colleges and universities for purposes of state planning;
- achieving greater efficiencies in state systems of higher education and within individual institutions;
- identifying new criteria to use in funding colleges and universities; and
- increasing international, interstate, and intra-state competition for high quality higher education.

Policy spectrum

The state policy and regional accreditation association approaches to instituting higher education assessment have covered a broad spectrum from low expectations and limited intrusion at one end of the spectrum, to very high expectations and external involvement in measuring outcomes at the opposite end. The policies that reflect low expectations and no intrusion typically focus upon persuading regional accrediting associations to establish new policies or encouraging colleges and universities to voluntarily plan and conduct assessments with no clear consequences. More aggressive policies include state laws that require colleges and universities to measure and report their quality and performance, or funding formulas that provide incentives or rewards to colleges and universities for either carrying out assessments or for performance on various types of assessments. The techniques for measuring quality and performance have also varied widely from administering standardized tests that measure undergraduate student achievement to consumer-oriented surveys of student and alumni satisfaction and self perceptions of their own achievement and the effectiveness of their alma maters.

State variations

Each regional accrediting association and state has a unique and distinctive history regarding college and university assessment policies. Much of their distinctiveness is an artifact of their unique state customs/traditions and their geographic and cultural heritage. So even when different regional accrediting associations and states appear to use similar language to describe their policies and implementation strategies, they are often dissimilar. Each state agency was founded under different circumstances and is possessed of different statutory authority for adopting and carrying out assessment policies. For some, the central focus of assessment is upon student learning and development and instructional quality, while for others, broader criteria are important and assessment of teaching and learning plays a relatively minor role in a multidimensional policy that includes access, administrative efficiency, research, development, and overall productivity. Each of the six regional accrediting associations has established higher education assessment standards and criteria during the past 12 years and each one is unique. Only a handful of states has failed to establish higher education assessment policies and even these few have different reasons why they lack policies, and different estimates about when they will achieve these.

The next research

state survey
site documentation

The subsequent three stages of the research will begin after this report is completed and will examine state and regional assessment policies more intensively. In the second stage, a survey of the 50 states and the six regional accrediting associations will reveal greater details about statutory authority of the states and the opinions of policymakers, higher education and regional accreditation leaders about the effectiveness of their policies and practices. In the third stage, we will visit a selected variety of states and regional accreditation associations

with different assessment policies and practices to document how the policies are being implemented and their impact on improving teaching and learning on the nation's campuses.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW — THE STATES

The impetus for colleges and universities to periodically assess the quality of teaching and learning on campus has been manifold. As of the mid-1980s the catalysts for the assessment movement in higher education have included additions of assessment standards in regional accreditation for colleges and universities, burgeoning state policy initiatives, national reports from a variety of leading special commissions, and funded institutional projects such as the Kellogg Foundation support of University of Tennessee's performance funding initiatives (Banta & Moffett, 1987). State higher education governance and regional accrediting association interest in outcomes assessment are not, however, recent developments.

Involvement begins

Since the establishment of land grant colleges and universities in the mid and late 19th century, states have been concerned with and involved in the effective workings of their public postsecondary institutions. The historic foundations for state involvement in public higher education have rested on long-standing concerns for whether state commitments to access, economic development within the state, and the cultivation of a skilled citizenry are being adequately addressed by their public colleges and universities (Ewell, 1985a, 1985b, 1987; Fisher, 1988).

Federal funding rises to nearly $9 billion by 1979-80.

The post-World War II expansion of student enrollments and federal funding of student aid and institutional research have increased government involvement in institutional policies and practices (Bender, 1983; Sabloff, 1997). In 1939-1940 the federal government was the source[1] of just over $38 million of the revenue generated by higher education institutions. In 1959-1960 that amount exceeded $1 billion, and by 1979-1980 the amount of federal funding appropriations to institutions of higher education had grown to nearly $9 billion.

State funding soars to over $18 billion by 1979-1980.

The growth in state government contributions to higher education institutions[2] was even more dramatic over this period of time, increasing from $151 million in 1939-1940 to $1.3 billion in 1959-1960, and to over $18 billion in 1979-1980 (NCES, 1995, p. 333). This increase in higher education dollars from federal and state government has prompted increased concern at all levels about

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[1] The source for this information is the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. These dollar figures do not reflect federally supported student aid that is received through students, which is included in another category of information on the table from which these figures were drawn.

[2] Includes federal aid received through state channels and regional compacts, through 1959-1960.

the effective and efficient use of valuable and highly competitive resources and accountability by the colleges and universities that receive the resources (Stevens & Hamlett, 1983).

Quality concerns

The 1980s were marked by a shift from quantity to quality concerns

In spite of the growth in the financial resources and size of colleges and universities, the new responsibilities for assessment are a consequence of a shift in the priorities in public higher education over the past 15 years away from expansion in the number and size in favor of greater emphasis upon quality. As early as 1979, a distinguished leader of public higher education in Ohio, John Millett, foretold the changing emphasis in the role and focus of state-level, centralized lay boards:

> *"State boards of higher education are going to hear a great deal about quality in the next several years. We have talked about quality in public higher education in the past, but I believe it is fair to say that at the level of state government our necessary preoccupation in the 1960s and 1970s was with quantity rather than quality. Now state governments will be told that it is time to give renewed attention to the quality of our higher education endeavors" (Millett, 1979).*

Some states demand demonstrations of specific outcomes.

Fisher (1988) confirms the accuracy of Millett's forecast and contends that the renewed attention to quality fostered new levels of state legislative involvement in the affairs of public higher education institutions. Despite long-standing state concerns for institutional quality and effectiveness, the 1980s saw some states made explicit their expectations for more systematic and coordinated approaches to assessment and the demonstration of specific outcomes. For example, in 1982 the Florida state legislature directed the higher education system to develop the College-Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) as a rising junior exam. In 1984 the South Dakota Board of Regents adopted Resolution 32-1984 which created a testing program designed to measure students academic performance. In 1985 the New Jersey Board of Higher Education created the College Outcomes Evaluation Program (COEP), a comprehensive outcomes assessment program.

Critical reports added to pressures for educational reform.

Throughout the 1980s, a flurry of national reports hailed the need for substantive educational reform. Included among the organizations and reports that critically analyzed the declining quality and lack of accountability of postsecondary education were: the Association of American Colleges' *Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community* (1985); the National Institute of Education's Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education, *Involvement in Learning* (1984) report; and the National Endowment of the Humanities, in *To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education* (1984).

Ewell proposals

Ewell proposes new state mechanisms to induce institutional improvements.

At about the same time, Peter Ewell (1985a) authored an influential working paper for the Education Commission of States, arguing that state governments should get involved in assessing undergraduate education because of their significant financial investment in their systems of higher education and because successful higher education systems should, in turn, facilitate the meeting of other state policy objectives. According to Ewell, in order for states to have an influence on their institutions, they must develop funding and regulatory policy mechanisms that induce institutional-level efforts toward self improvement and monitor those institutional efforts by regularly collecting and reporting on identified measures of effectiveness (Ewell, 1985a, 1985b).

Ewell guidelines: recognize diversity; create incentives; differentiate funding; allow discretion; pick multiple indicators; use existing data

Recognizing the historical and distinctive character of public colleges and universities as self-governing, autonomous cultures, Ewell (1985a) posits that lasting changes, particularly the now publicly demanded improvements expected of higher education, need to come from within the educational institutions themselves. Citing examples of past and ongoing state policy mechanisms as reference points, Ewell (1985c) urged state policymakers to follow certain guidelines for action, including the following six:

- recognize and preserve institutional diversity;
- create positive incentives for improvement;
- distinguish funding incentives for improvement from ongoing institutional funding mechanisms;
- afford institutions discretion in achieving improvement, but hold all accountable for regularly demonstrating their progress;
- stress use of concrete information on, as well as, multiple indicators of institutional performance;
- and whenever possible use existing information.

Governors' stance

Among the national reports decrying the need for educational reform and seemingly responding to Ewell's observations of how states could influence institutional assessment, is the National Governors Association (NGA) 1986 report, *Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education.* In the preface of the report, Task Force Chairman John Ashcroft, then Governor of Missouri, defended state intervention:

> *"The public has the right to know what it is getting for its expenditure of tax resources; the public has a right to know and understand the quality of undergraduate education that young people receive from publicly funded colleges and universities. They have a right to know that their resources are being wisely invested and committed."*

The states' role in the assessment movement was considered paramount by this representational body. "As the primary source of funds for public higher educa-

tion, the states have a major stake in the quality of postsecondary education that goes beyond the measures of input and processes. State attention must be directed to the outcomes of the higher education system – namely measuring how much students learn in college" (Roaden, 1987, p. 9).

Quality task force

Five recommendations clarify missions; emphasize undergrads use multiple measures; provide incentives; recommit to access.

The National Governors Association formed seven task forces to formulate policies to improve various aspects of education. Six of the seven task forces were charged with matters related to elementary and secondary schools; the seventh was the Task Force on College Quality. Based upon the testimonies and advice of higher education officials and professionals from assessment organizations and national education associations, the Task Force on College Quality recommended the following five actions regarding college outcome assessment:

- State officials should clarify the missions of each public institution and encourage the same for independent colleges;
- State officials should re-emphasize the fundamental importance of undergraduate instruction;
- Each college and university should implement programs that use multiple measures to assess undergraduate student learning as a means of evaluating institutional and program quality and share the information with the public;
- State officials should adjust funding formulas to provide incentives for improving undergraduate student learning based upon the results of comprehensive assessment programs and encourage independent colleges to do likewise;
- State officials should reaffirm their commitment to access to public higher education for students of all socioeconomic backgrounds (National Governors' Association Center for Policy Research and Analysis, 1986).

Autonomy stressed

SHEEO Task force compromises between independence of institutions and state needs for outcomes measures.

As a link between the suggested mandates of the NGA Report and actual practices at the state level, the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) formed a Task Force on Program and Institutional Assessment to enlarge upon NGA's recommendations. In recommending 10 approaches to outcomes assessment, the SHEEO Task Force emphasized institutional flexibility and autonomy in assessment at the campus level. While wanting to honor institutional independence the Task Force also saw the need to acknowledge "the role of statewide assessment in relation to assessment at each campus as the upper part of a pyramid. There are certain common aims of higher education that should be subject to statewide assessment, but in no way should these exhaust the assessment undertaken at each campus" (Roaden et al., 1987, p. 2). Clearly SHEEO was treading carefully amidst a culture now characterized by both the need to honor institutional autonomy and the needs of states for detailed information on how their public institutions are faring on a variety of measures of quality and effectiveness.

SHEEO's policy statement on program and institutional assessment recommended that states develop uniform definitions of graduation and retention for institutional comparison. SHEEO urged financial incentives for higher quality instructional programs, and the inclusion in institutional budgets of funding for assessment programs. Public colleges and universities were called on by the states to assess entering students for purposes of placement and remediation, and to determine the achievement of general education objectives, the performance of students on licensure and certification examinations, the successful placement of students from occupational programs into matching jobs, the successful transfer of community college students to four-year institutions, and the satisfaction of alumni (Roaden et al., 1987).

States take action

12 have statutes; 21 have policies; 8 combined both — see Appendix A.

Leading up to or either immediately following the NGA 1986 report and SHEEO's policy statement, the state legislatures and governors in Florida and Colorado passed statutes and the states of California, Florida, Georgia, South Dakota, Tennessee and Utah established policies. Today 12 states have statutes, 21 have policies, and eight have a combination of statute and policy that require colleges and universities to assess student outcomes.

Objectives varied

Like accreditation standards, state statutes and policies have varying goals and objectives as well as methods they use to assess progress toward achieving their goals. Some state initiatives are aimed toward determining student eligibility to progress to the higher levels in the curriculum or to qualify for a degree; some are aimed toward helping policymakers allocate resources; still others are aimed at curriculum and program evaluation; and others have the singular goal of public accountability. This research project is particularly interested in understanding whether states have policies and practices in place to examine the nature and outcomes of teaching and student learning. A description of each state's current statutes and policies and their evolution is presented in Appendix A.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW — ACCREDITATION ASSOCIATIONS

1906 first mention

Accreditation is a uniquely-American construction, characterized as a voluntary, self-regulating, evaluative process that combines outside peer review and consultation of institutions with internal evaluation and planning. The accreditation process emerged as a national concern and practice at the 1906 meeting of the National Association of State Universities (NASU), where a corps of higher education leaders including representatives from the four existing regional associations recommended the development of common institutional definitions

and standards of college admissions (Young, 1983). Since their founding at the turn of the twentieth century[3], the historic role of the six regional accrediting associations in the United States has expanded and is now manifold. Originally the associations assisted in defining criteria for the transition from high school to college and establishing institutional requirements for membership in their organization (Young, 1983). Practices and priorities in accreditation have experienced considerable change over the years: from working to fit all institutions into a common mold to recognizing and encouraging institutional uniqueness and diversity; and from judging institutional adherence to criteria to facilitating institutional improvement (Young, 1983).

Impartial image

Even though the chief administrative and academic leaders of colleges and universities constitute the governing bodies of these accrediting associations, they have maintained the public image of being impartial judges of the quality of their colleges and universities. They establish the policies by which accrediting associations operate, set the standards by which institutions are judged, and ultimately approve whether member institutions that seek to be accredited (every five to 10 years) meet accreditation standards.

Linked to funding

Federal statutes that provide funds require list of accrediting bodies

A stamp of approval by any of the six regional accrediting associations for many years has been tantamount to approval for funding both by the federal government and by state governments. Since the 1952 Veterans Re-adjustment Act, the federal government has relied upon regional accrediting associations to determine which colleges and universities were of sufficient quality to receive federal funding (Section 253 of Pub. L. 82-550; 66 STAT.675). All federal statutes since 1952, wherein funds are appropriated to higher education institutions, contain a statement by Congress requiring the U.S. Commissioner of Education, now the U.S. Secretary of Education, to publish a list of nationally recognized accrediting associations that are reliable authorities on the quality of training or education offered by postsecondary institutions (Finkin, 1973; Kaplin, 1975). In addition every state has a "Postsecondary Education Authorization Act" requiring higher education institutions to be approved by a designated state agency (generally the centralized governing/coordinating board) or be accredited by an accrediting association in order to be licensed to operate in the state.

Colleges and universities also rely upon accrediting associations to decide whether to accept course credits from students transferring from other academic

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[3] The Western Association of Schools and Colleges was founded much more recently, in 1962. The remaining five regional accrediting associations were founded in the indicated years: New England Association of Schools and Colleges, 1885; Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 1887; North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, 1895; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 1895; and the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, 1917 (Bemis, 1983).

institutions; and graduate and professional schools rely upon them when admitting students by taking into account the quality of their undergraduate institutions.

States take action

Despite the long tradition and widespread public dependence upon regional accrediting associations, two decades ago William Troutt (1978) pointed out the growing number of criticisms by state policy makers, government leaders and campus officials that accrediting associations lacked standards to provide quality in teaching and learning. Troutt (1978) observed,

> *"regional accreditation standards primarily serve purposes other than quality assurance. Most standards relate to institutional self-improvement. The perfection of institutional "machinery" far outweighs concerns about institutional quality in terms of student achievement" (p. 49).*

Critics have charged that the standards used by regional accrediting associations place heavy emphasis upon inputs such as admissions scores of entering students, the number of books in the library, the size of the endowment and the physical plant, and the credentials of the faculty, without being concerned about outcomes and results (Troutt, 1978).

Outcomes needed

In 1980, Young and Chambers (1980) offered commentary on the continuing evolution of the accreditation process, and noted, in particular, the emerging focus on clearly defining and measuring expected educational outcomes during the institutional self-evaluation process. In 1983 Stark and Austin observed that "considerable criticism has recently been aimed at accreditors because of their failure to take an explicit interest in student needs and development" (p. 214) and they predicted that the ways in which the measurement of educational quality captured and informed students' educational experiences would be of tremendous relevance to the higher education community, its critics and its benefactors.

Changes endorsed

Governors urge regionals toward greater emphasis on undergraduate learning outcomes

While state involvement in assessment was the target of considerable scrutiny and discussion as of the mid-1980s so, too, were the regional accrediting associations. As Albrecht (1989) observed, regional accrediting associations were at a crossroads, pondering whether they would continue to be effective instruments for ensuring quality or become obsolete.

The NGA Governors' 1986 Action Agenda chided the regionals to be more explicit about the accreditation process. The NGA report emphasized the importance of accrediting associations collecting and utilizing information about undergraduate student outcomes. According to the NGA (1986), demonstrated levels of student learning and performance should be a consideration in granting institutional accreditation (NGA, 1986). And the SHEEO Task Force on Pro-

gram and Institutional Assessment recommended that accreditation agencies use the results of institutional assessment, including assessment of student outcomes in the accreditation process (Roaden et al., 1987).

In 1986 the North Central Association of College and Schools (NCACS) held a Wingspread Conference on Rethinking Accreditation. In one of the papers, NCACS Commissioner Frederick Crosson wrote about the need for institutional improvement to play a greater role in the institutional review and accreditation process. Impetus for change in accreditation practices was coming from both internal and external pressures and in recent years the associations' role and focus has shifted toward providing quality assurance for higher education institutions and serving as a catalyst for enhancing institutional quality and effectiveness (NEASC, 1996; Thrash, 1989). Through the continuation of institutional self-study and periodic peer review processes, accreditation has gauged institutional quality by evidence of inputs, resources, and processes and more recently outcomes that reveal the extent of institutional quality (Young and Chambers, 1980).

New processes

As of the mid-1980s and early 1990s, outcomes assessment and, in particular, the assessment of student learning and instructional processes began to emerge as means by which accrediting associations could continue to secure their role in ensuring the quality and effectiveness of higher education institutions. Table 1 illustrates that between 1984 and 1992 the six regional accrediting associations revised and/or adopted accreditation standards and criteria, and in some cases developed new policies, separate from accreditation criteria or standards, explicitly aimed at assessing educational outcomes.

Table 1
Regional Accreditation Association, Year of Outcomes Assessment Policy and Name of Policy, Standard, or Statement

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools	1984	Section III of Criteria: Institutional Effectiveness
Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges	1985 1996	Standard for Outcomes Assessment Policy Statement on Assessment
Western Association of Schools and Colleges	1988	Standard 2: Institutional Effectiveness Standard 4: Undergraduate Programs Standard 7: Student Services and the Co-curricular Learning Environment
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools	1989	Statement on the Assessment of Student Academic Achievement
New England Association of Schools and Colleges	1992	Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness
Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges	1994	Policy 25: Educational Assessment Standard Five: Educational Program and Its Effectiveness

Southern group

Assessment first seen as means of measuring institutional effectiveness

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) led the regional associations in its early (1984) adoption of assessment as a means of measuring institutional effectiveness. Section III: Institutional Effectiveness, of its six Criteria for Accreditation, addresses how institutions should approach the use of institutional assessment for examining instructional practices and learning processes and gauging overall institutional effectiveness. In order to plan and evaluate the primary educational activities of teaching, research, and public service, an institution must: "establish clearly defined purposes appropriate to collegiate education, formulate educational goals consistent with the institution's purpose; develop and implement procedures to evaluate the extent to which these educational goals are being achieved and use the results of these evaluations to improve educational programs, services, and operations" (*Criteria for Accreditation*, 1996, p.20). One of SACS' current imperatives is that institutional success be measured in terms of student achievement (*Criteria for Accreditation*, 1996).

Middle States

Association lists 16 characteristics of excellence for accreditation

Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges has 16 characteristics of excellence which are used as accreditation standards. In 1985 the association adopted a standard for outcomes assessment, which in the 1994 edition of the Association's *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education* states that an institution's accreditation is determined by the presence of "policies and procedures, qualitative and quantitative, as appropriate, which lead to the effective assessment of institutional, program, and student learning outcomes." In the 1990 edition of *Framework for Outcomes Assessment*, Middle States explicitly linked institutional excellence and educational quality with the extent and quality of student learning. According to Middle States an institution is effective when it is asking itself what should students be learning; how well are they learning it; how do we know this; and what do we plan on doing with the answers. According to the most recent edition of *Framework*, the "ultimate purpose of assessment is to improve teaching and learning" (1996, p. 14).

Training sessions followed upon member survey

In 1995 the association sought to determine its progress in outcomes assessment by surveying member institutions. One key recommendation resulting from the responses urged greater associational guidance for how to go about assessing outcomes. In the fall of 1996, Middle States responded by instituting training symposia designed to provide information on effective outcomes assessment approaches and programs.

More than ten years after the initial adoption of assessment as an accreditation standard Middle States drafted a Policy Statement on Assessment (1996) reaffirming its expectation that institutions will attend to the assessment of student learning outcomes as their primary means of improving institutional quality.

Western group

1988 standards emphasised use of assessment for institutional and program quality

In 1988 the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) adopted revised accreditation standards with one of the new major emphases being the incorporation of assessment for assuring institutional and program quality and effectiveness. The issue of assessment is found embedded in four sections of the association's standards: institutional effectiveness (Standard 2.C), evaluation of general education (Standard 4.B), program review (Standard 4.F.5), and co-curricular educational growth (Standard 7.A). The intent of this initiative has been to create a "culture of evidence within institutions such that the asking of questions related to effectiveness of educational programs and support services is ongoing and appropriate data are collected to respond" (WASC Resource Manual, 1992, p.2). In 1995 the association created a Task Force on the Role of Accreditation in the Assessment of Student Learning and Teaching Effectiveness. Their final report identified minimal institutional requirements for the assessment of learning and teaching and more importantly argued for the educational experience of students to become a central focus of the accrediting process. In July 1996 Ralph Wolff, Executive Director of WASC, stated that his goal was "to move the accreditation process to a much more learner- and learner-centered process" (Wolff, 1996, p.1). To achieve this end, WASC is as of the spring of 1997 embarking on a series of experimental self studies and visits which are putting assessment and learning at the center of the accreditation process.

Recent intentions focus on putting learner at centre of the process

North Central

Statements see assessment of student learning as essential component

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCACS) published a Statement on the Assessment of Student Academic Achievement in October, 1989. Comparable to Middle States, NCACS took and has held the position in two subsequent revisions of the Statement, that the assessment of student learning is an essential component of measuring overall institutional effectiveness. And the ultimate goal of assessment is the improvement of student learning. Two of NCACS's five criteria for accreditation emphasize the use of assessment in evaluating and improving teaching and learning at member institutions. Criteria Three asks for evidence that "the institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes." Criteria Four looks for evidence that the "institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness." Of all the possible outcomes NCACS member institutions might study as a means of documenting institutional effectiveness, none are required except for outcomes documenting student academic achievement.

As of June 1995 all member institutions were required to submit an institutional plan demonstrating to NCACS how they intended to assess student academic achievement on their campus. Those plans were reviewed and a report, *Opportunities for Improvement: Advice from Consultant-Evaluators on Programs to Assess Student Learning*, describing broad, emerging institutional developments and directions was published in March 1996 (Lopez, 1996).

New England group

Criteria aim to stimulate colleges to inquire about their effectiveness

While the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEAS&C) has 11 Standards for Accreditation, assessment was originally and is most directly addressed in its 1992 Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness. This policy emphasizes that, "an institution's efforts and ability to assess its effectiveness and use the obtained information for its improvement are important indicators of institutional quality. The teaching and learning process is a primary focus of the assessment process." Accreditation and assessment share the same end – enabling institutions to reach their full academic potential. The association Evaluation Manual states that "one institutional goal of NEAS&C's effectiveness criteria is to cultivate within an institution a habit of inquisitiveness about its effectiveness with a corollary commitment to making meaningful use of the results of that curiosity." According to the Background Paper used in training evaluation team members on issues of assessment, "the assessment of an institution's effectiveness carefully differentiates between what graduates know and what the institution has done to enable them to learn."

As of April 1997, NEAS&C initiated the Student Outcomes Assessment Project, an effort to assist its member institutions' efforts to use student outcomes assessment for improvement of institutional effectiveness. The first stage of the project is a survey of institutional assessment efforts which will be subsequently shared in aggregate form with member institutions. From the survey results annual forums and publications will be designed and distributed as a form of institutional support.

Northwest group

Policy defines effectiveness in terms of change it effects in students

The Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges Accreditation Handbook (1994) includes Policy 25: Educational Assessment. This states that educational effectiveness is defined in terms of the change it brings about in students. Outcomes assessment is viewed as an essential component of the self-study process. Of the association's 12 Standards for Self Study, Standard Five: Educational Program and Its Effectiveness is most explicitly related to assessment. The subcategories of this standard establish that educational program planning be based on regular and continuous assessment. Assessment is to be well-integrated into institutional planning. As well, institutions must be prepared to demonstrate how the evidence gathered via their assessment efforts is used to improve learning and teaching.

Start of new era?

The new accreditation standards seem to reflect a new era for regional accreditation in which every college and university seeking approval must engage in assessing the quality of their teaching and learning processes. Given the recent changes, the next phase of this research will seek to discover from the regional accreditors, the extent to which colleges and universities seeking reapproval are focusing upon the student learning and instructional improvement

aspects of the criteria. The variation in standards among the six regions coupled with the lack of prescription as far as requiring specific instruments or methods and procedures may explain why many state policymakers feel the need to develop statutes and policies around quality assurance. The complete standards on outcome assessment for all six accrediting areas are presented in Appendix B.

REVIEW OF PAST RESEARCH

The climate of heightened expectations and burgeoning guidelines for state government and regional accreditation association involvement in institutional assessment begs the question of the actual nature of state and accrediting association commitment to outcomes assessment. What state and regional accreditation assessment policies and practices exist? What has been their evolution over the period of time from the 1980s to present? Since 1987 four surveys regarding state and regional accreditation association assessment policies and practices have been conducted. This section describes these prior surveys and presents the important and relevant findings.

1987 joint survey

Findings included: formal policies trend to autonomy; state boards active; activities inclusive; state role varied

As 1985-86 Chairman of the Education Commission of States (ECS), New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean initiated a three-year project called, *Effective State Action to Improve Undergraduate Education*. As a means of informing this agenda, ECS, along with SHEEO and the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) cosponsored a survey of the assessment and outcomes measurement policies and practices of the 50 states (Boyer, Ewell, Finney & Mingle, 1987a). In December of 1986 a structured survey was mailed to both the academic and executive officers of the SHEEO network. Responses from all 50 states were obtained either in writing or over the phone. Profiles for each state were written "to capture the flavor of each state's response to the survey and to present a faithful presentation of that response, including what was not said, within appropriate state context" (Boyer, Ewell, Finney & Mingle, 1987b, p. 7). Key findings from this survey included the following:

- As of 1987 two-thirds of states had formal assessment policies.
- A trend toward institutional autonomy in design and implementation of assessment approach was noted.
- State boards were found to be playing an important role – two-thirds of states had explicit statewide assessment program planned or in place. Most of those states without statewide efforts reported campus assessment activity.
- Assessment was broadly defined among the states and resulting assessment programs that included everything from sophomore to senior testing programs, institutional and program reviews, using outcomes measures, to alumni surveys.

- The nature of state role in assessment varied, particularly in terms of the extent to which assessment and outcomes measurement were considered or had become a distinct policy or whether they were incorporated into already existing policy processes such as strategic planning or program review.
- The degree of state involvement varied. Approximately one-third of the states played a minimal role, coordinating, monitoring, and reporting what individual institutions and/or systems were doing. In over one-half of the states, the board's role was to "actively" encourage, promote or facilitate; "serve as a catalyst," "provide incentives," and "develop guidelines." About 10 states were actively designing and implementing assessment programs, primarily in the form of testing programs of some kind. "Most state boards recognize that assessment is ultimately a campus responsibility" (Boyer, Ewell, Finney & Mingle, 1987b, p. 10).

Outcomes varied

The respondents commented on positive outcomes of state level involvement with assessment. With increased accountability came increased state financial support for such programs as "centers of excellence" and other quality-focused improvements. Institutional leaders found that state involvement facilitated the development of other internal reforms such as improved data gathering and campus level program reviews. On the negative side, there had been an underestimation of the extent of the costs for assessment programs. And assessment itself was found to be not necessarily followed by improvement. A connection between the two must continually be forged, one to the other.

State role certain

From the perspective of those state policymakers filling out the 1987 survey, the future of assessment was likely to be characterized by increased state interest and involvement in the next one to two years. A third of respondents believed further development of tests and instruments measuring basic skills, general education outcomes, critical thinking and other higher order skills were in line. One fourth of the respondents anticipated assessment of entering student skills, abilities, and attitudes along with alumni surveys. A majority expressed opinions that responsibility for designing and implementing assessment should be that of individual institutions. If the institutions performed their jobs adequately, they would be left alone. Only a minority predicted the likelihood of further legislative action, but they acknowledged that the legislature was hard to predict. Perhaps the most powerful observation resulting from the 1987 ECS survey was that "governors and legislators have placed the quality of undergraduate education and student learning on the state agenda. The state boards aim to keep it there" (Boyer, Ewell, Finney & Mingle, 1987b. p. 9).

1990 joint survey

In the fall of 1989 ECS, SHEEO, and AAHE cosponsored a second survey on state initiatives in assessment and outcome measurement which was mailed to SHEEO academic officers (Paulson, 1990). From the returned surveys and in some unidentified cases, from relevant reports and policies which were returned with the questionnaires, a common format describing statewide or systemwide approaches to assessment and outcomes measurement was developed for each state. For each of the 50 states the following information was included, if available: origins of the initiative, description of initiative, primary purpose of assessment, collection (or lack thereof) of common data or test results, reporting requirements for institutions, whether state approval was required for institutional initiatives, funding, and anticipated future evolution or development of assessment initiatives. Ewell, Finney and Lenth (1990) describe the emerging pattern of state-based assessment, particularly as it compares to the findings of the 1987 survey. The following developments were noted:

Findings included:
more documentation
more sophistication
focus on learning
distinct policy area
differing policies
varied approaches
varied reporting
some new funding
no plans in 8 states
27 states operational

- States could more fully document their assessment efforts. They had gone from discussion and planning to implementation.
- "A sharper image of assessment had emerged among state leaders" (Ewell, Finney and Lenth, 1990, p. 3). There was now recognition that assessment of college outcomes was different from assessment of basic skills upon entry.
- Most states saw the primary focus of assessment to be student learning. While student persistence and satisfaction studies were still prevalent, they were not viewed as assessment in and of themselves.
- Assessment had evolved into an identifiably distinctive policy arena at the state level.
- Distinct variations among states' policies were found to persist.
- While an assessment of student learning was required by all states, the approaches varied.
- All institutions required reporting of some kind, but content and format varied.
- Some policies and programs were funded by new state dollars; many more were financed using state appropriations from base budgets.
- Only 8 of 48 reporting states (ND, DE, NB, OK, PA, MI, VT, and WY) indicated they had no assessment practices or policies in place or planned.
- Just over half (27) of the states reported having in place "an identifiable assessment initiative."

4 themes emerge

Four emerging themes were observed by Ewell, Finney and Lenth (1990). First, assessment had made considerable advancement from the experimental to the mainstream of state policy. Second, institutional flexibility, and to a great degree autonomy persisted. Despite institutional-based fear that assessment instruments would be mandated by the state, this practice remained a relative rarity.

assessment routine
autonomy persists
institutions pay
improvement focus

Commonality in cognitive outcomes testing was in place in four states (FL,GA, NJ, TN). Four states reported common basic skills testing (TX, NJ, AK, VT). Four states reported periodic use of common alumni and student surveys and 12 states reported the development of statewide comparative student retention data. The third emerging pattern was the strong trend toward institutional responsibility for financing assessment. Assessment should have been interpreted not as an add-on commanded by the state, but as something institutions should naturally be engaged in. The fourth and final trend noted by this survey was that improvement continued to be a stronger theme than accountability within the state initiative. Thirty-one of the states viewed assessment's primary purpose as institutional improvement or curricular revitalization, while three states thought the primary purpose of assessment was the development of more uniform academic standards. Six of the respondents believed the primary purpose was demonstrating the effectiveness of higher education to the legislature and the public.

As of 1990 an emergent policy consensus was evident. "State leaders are beginning to agree that when handled properly, assessment can be a powerful 'lever for change'" (Ewell, Finney & Lenth, 1990, p. 5).

1995 ACT survey

Report identified factors shaping assessment as: governmental forces workforce issues welfare reform distance learning

In February of 1995 American College Testing mailed a postsecondary assessment needs survey to each state commission, the six regional accrediting associations for higher education, 223 four-year regional state colleges and universities, 177 two-year public colleges and 33 national higher education associations and agencies. The goal was to capture a snapshot of current assessment practices and concerns, as well as future anticipated directions for assessment (Steele and Lutz, 1995). Responses were received from 33 states, 4 regional accrediting associations, one-third of institutions, and only 3 of the national associations/agencies. A Focus Group was referred to, but neither a description of the approach or the participants, nor questions asked were included in the final report.

The resulting report identified broad contextual elements which according to the respondents were currently shaping and which were expected to affect the future of the assessment movement. These involved external pressures from state and federal agencies, which were a major force in shaping the movement towards outcomes assessment. Accrediting agencies were now asking institutions to document institutional effectiveness via the measurement of student achievement and learning.

Future factors that would keep accountability issues at the forefront of considerations included, "workforce development issues; training coupled with welfare reform; and changes in instruction brought about by the growth of distance learning" (Steele and Lutz, 1995, p. 2).

Survey findings

Key Findings from the survey:

- States saw assessment of higher education as an important concern.
- Twenty of 33 responding state boards expressed an interest in or need for the development of common measures.
- Areas where outcomes assessment were seen as most important included general education and foundation skills.
- Half of the colleges that responded identified concerns with the ability to define and assess general education, and the absence of faculty involvement in the assessment process (It is not clear who filled out institutional surveys, which might clarify the positions of those concerned about this lack of faculty involvement).

Focus group data

Key findings from Focus Groups:

- The desire for more funding on the part of institutions was now paired with their burgeoning recognition that funding would be or already was directly linked with assessment activities.
- State and federal pressures were resulting in more of a compliance mode than efforts aimed at improving quality on the part of institutions.
- Legislature and public were calling for greater accountability, not necessarily improvement.
- Institutional climate was one of anxiety rooted in comparison and evaluation uses of assessment data and processes.

State board aims

State Boards identified specific concerns/questions they wanted answered. They included:

- The desire to understand how institutions measure accurately what students gain from their enrollment in the institution versus what skills and knowledge they already possess upon enrolling (issue of value-added, capabilities of pre- and post-testing students).
- Are students developing an adequate level of general education skills?
- How are institutions using outcomes information for improvement in multiple areas, including the curriculum?
- What indicators exist to demonstrate status of students and institutions (i.e. graduation rates)?
- How can the state determine if the measures institutions are using are valid and reliable?

Steele and Lutz (1995) note from the results of the survey that "state boards express much more concern than colleges about the meaningful use of assessment data to improve effectiveness and efficiency in teaching/learning.

However, they do not indicate much greater awareness of the difficulties in introducing substantive change or the need for a variety of support structures and incentives to support change efforts" (p. 6).

1995 NCES survey

One question was whether assessment could provide a single indicator of collegiate attainment

In December of 1995 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) held the third workshop in a series examining the assessment of learning at the college level with representatives responsible for postsecondary assessment activities in the 50 states and selected territories, plus assessment experts and NCES staff. Participants were asked to complete a pre-workshop inventory characterizing the origins and development of their assessment approach, kinds of assessment instruments used, obstacles to assessment initiatives, and methodological problems encountered. NCES wanted to examine the extent and characteristics of state-level postsecondary assessment activities.

> *"Because it was expected that states would differ in both capacity and approach, the posed question was not whether raw state results could be summarized into a single indicator. Rather it was the degree to which these many state efforts might help to paint a broader collective picture of collegiate attainment in relation to broadly-identified workplace and societal skills" (NCHEMS, 1996, p. 3).*

The purpose of capturing and characterizing what the 50 states were doing was the intention to "determine the degree to which the results of such activities are sufficiently consistent with one another and the domains addressed by Goal 6.5 [of the National Education Goals] to provide an initial basis for constructing a national indicator of collegiate achievement. In this respect the information provided by the state background papers indicated that current state programs could not provide such a basis" (NCHEMS, 1996, p. 5-6). Gathering state information was a means to an end — not the single focus of this design.

NCES findings

Findings included: more states active institutional focus accountability aim measures unclear more summative

Key findings included the following:

- Little substantive change noted since 1989/90 study.
- More states were explicitly involved in assessment initiatives.
- Most still used "institution-centered" approach that encouraged development of local plans, use of results, and did not require common measures.
- Focus shifted from improvement to accountability. Wider political context revealed growing emphasis on governance and fiscal matters were predominating over issues of educational improvement. Concerns about quality were being replaced by concerns about productivity.
- Institution-specific outcome measures did not translate well to such external audiences as state officials, parents, and students. Therefore more consideration was being given to development and reporting of common measures.
- Move from formative toward summative approaches.

- Overall, about half the states had institution-centered policy approaches in which institutions devised their own assessment methods according to general state guidelines. About two-thirds of the institution-centered approaches were the result of board mandates versus explicit legislation.
- While assessment policy patterns remained consistent, this report noted that states had de-emphasized actively enforcing assessment policies with institutions, because other policy concerns had taken precedence.
- Political instability of assessment agencies (e.g., abolition of NJ assessment program) and ongoing fiscal concerns required that assessment not just provide data, but be embedded in broader set of restructuring initiatives.
- Some states saw regional accrediting bodies as taking dominant role in requiring and enforcing institution-centered assessment activities.
- The de-emphasis on assessment enforcement was due to state dissatisfaction with the ability of institution-centered approaches to address increasing pressure for public accountability.
- Approximately one-third of "institution-centered" states expected common performance indicators (mostly non-outcomes based) to be part of institutional reporting requirements.
- Few (15%) states used or were developing a common outcome measure. Several "institution-centered" states were considering using common testing. States were very interested in using common measures (17 collect/report measures of institutional performance; 35 report graduation/completion rates) for student assessment, but are constrained by "lack of appropriate instruments" and "costs of implementation and development" (not by any ideological problems with use of common testing).
- Compared to mid-1980s, assessment policies were now more likely to be linked with other policy initiatives, or systems of regulation and incentive. Assessment data were included in accountability report cards that contained information on faculty work load, student completion rates, instructional costs. Assessment policies were more frequently linked to funding.
- Assessment activities were being built into the basic operations of institutions in some states (e.g., use of performance-based or competency-based approaches to admission testing versus college entrance exams, or use of authentic assessment for credentialing in "virtual university").
- Overall, quality of postsecondary education seemed to be losing importance as a public policy issue (to prisons, health care, and tax reform); higher education is being viewed as primarily benefiting individuals and therefore less deserving of public funds.
- Most important obstacles to assessment identified were: high costs of developing assessment instruments; lack of appropriate instruments, lack of agreement on domains to be assessed; institutional resistance (faculty/research universities).
- Most important needs identified: additional funding; training and staff development (for state agency staff, faculty, and information sharing among states); clear policy leadership from federal government.

Other survey views on assessment:
institution-driven
enforcement lax
some instability
roles changing
some rethinking
commonality lacking
some policy links
basic routine
loss of status
development costs
funding needs

- In terms of actions to further assessment at the state-level, the report cited the need to embed student assessment measures into existing statewide academic program review processes, and work more closely with regional accreditation bodies to develop common performance standards.

It appears as though what states needed — uniform accountability information that is easily communicable to external audiences — was not what institutions needed — information that links changes in student outcomes to specific institutional experiences like curriculum and teaching methods. Lenth (1996) referred to this as a "dynamic tension within assessment between the internal and external, between improvement and accountability, between formative and summative uses, and between those doing it and those who need to know" (p. 157).

Research critique

Since the mid-1980s several studies describing the variety of state and regional accrediting associations' assessment policies and practices have been conducted. This research extends those efforts in several substantive ways. First, the ACT study (1995) was the only national study of assessment policies and practices to include the six regional accrediting associations. While the ACT survey was sent to the six associations, only four responded (Steele and Lutz, 1995). It is not clear which four. Moreover, the report does not include information about what the association assessment policies were and how they evolved over time. Using a single conceptual template for analyzing original documents from each of the six accrediting associations, this report describes the associations' commitments to assessment for improvement of learning and teaching, including expectations and requirements for the kinds of outcomes measures to be considered, and processes used in the institutional approaches to assessment (Appendix B).

Framework needed

This research extends what is currently known about state assessment policies by constructing a policy framework for analyzing original policy documents for each of the 50 states. Use of this conceptual framework makes it possible to compare state policies from a common perspective. The studies cited earlier have relied upon survey responses from the states and have taken the form of descriptions of state policies from each state perspective without a common framework. The lack of framework has impeded cross-state comparison. Prior research reports have "the flavor of each state's response" (Boyer, et al., 1987), emerging patterns (Ewell et al., 1990), and a broader collective picture of collegiate attainment (NCHEMS, 1996), but have not afforded a consistent state-by-state analysis. By focusing upon the policy context, policy type, policy stage, and outcomes as a research framework this research provides a model for the systematic collection, analysis, and dissemination of state policy information, and facilitates cross-state comparisons.

Finally this policy analytic approach to the research makes it possible to analyze whether and how regional accreditation and state policies and practices converge in the states, and show the interrelationships of policies established by the state and by the accreditation associations.

FINDINGS — STATES & ACCREDITATION ASSOCIATIONS

This phase of the research gathered, analyzed and is now reporting information that considers the variety of state and regional accreditation assessment policies and practices and shows how they affect the improvement of institutional climate, student learning, and performance. The present status of assessment policies and practices in each of the fifty states and the six regional accreditation associations is reported in this section. Detailed analyses of the policies of the 50 states and six regional accreditation agencies are presented in Appendix A and B. These analyses have been shared with state and accreditation agency administrators to verify the accuracy of interpretation. Feedback from these sources, with few exceptions, supported the accuracy of analysis and in some cases clarified and augmented the interpretation.

STATE ASSESSMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES

In order to make a comprehensive report on the present status of state assessment policies and practices, documents describing the assessment practices and policies of each of the 50 states were requested, gathered, analyzed, and organized. Appendix A presents an analysis of each of the states.

Policy analysis

A review of the substantial amount of information received from the states regarding their various assessment policies and practices led to the development of the conceptual framework to facilitate an analysis for each state. This framework also permits a comparative analysis of policies across states so commonalties, differences, trends, and patterns could be discerned. This section offers an explanation of how and why this framework was devised.

According to Palumbo (1988), "policy is the output of the policy-making system. It is the cumulative effect of all of the actions, decisions, and behaviors of the millions of people who make and implement public policy" (p. 17). This research conceptualizes public policy as government activity that takes place over time rather than as a single event, decision, or outcome (Palumbo, 1988; Heclo, 1973).

The focus of this study is assessment policy in public postsecondary education. Assessment has clearly become a state government activity since it has taken the form of legislation and guidelines issued by state-level executive agencies (e.g., State Education Department or Higher Education Coordinating Board). For the purposes of this analysis, any assessment activity initiated by a state legislature, state (higher) education executive agency, or state college/university system governing or coordinating board is considered public policy. In a handful of

states, there is no assessment activity at any of these levels. No policy is, however, in fact, a policy. It is a policy decision on the part of these states, not to act.

The framework's broadest function is to provide a picture of the inputs, processes, outcomes, and impacts (Worthen and Sanders, 1987) of each state or system's assessment policy. Within these overarching categories, however, the framework needs to answer several specific questions. The first specific question is: What is the policy context? For the purposes of our framework, the policy context consists of three elements: historical inputs, political inputs, and policy description.

The policy context

Historical inputs
Political inputs
Policy description

Historical inputs. Historical inputs address the perceived need(s) for assessment, if any, in a state, and prior policies, if any, which address that need.

Political inputs. Political inputs include a description of the original legislation, as well as any current legislation.

Policy description. According to Dubnick and Bardes (1983), there are six ways to describe a policy: (1) intentional – what is intended by the policy? (2) functional – what actually happened with this policy? (3) population-focused – who is affected by the policy? (4) developmental – how does the policy fit with what has come before? (5) programmatic – what programs will be created to carry out the policy? and (6) comparative – how does the policy compare with other policies? The policy description, adapted slightly from this one, attempts to capture the first four dimensions in the Policy Context section, the programmatic dimension in the Programs/Positions section, and the comparative dimension in the narrative that features the overall findings of our research.

The policy type

regulatory
reforming
quality assurance
accountability

The second question to answer is: What is the policy type? The most prevalent policy typology was established by Theodore Lowi (1972), who concluded that there are three basic types of policy: distributive, redistributive, and regulatory. Almond and Powell's (1966) typology categorizes policies as allocative, extractive, control, or symbolic. Richard Rose (1976) classified policies as static, cyclical, linear, or discontinuous. Each of these typologies informed the creation of our own policy typology, which was designed to accommodate the variety of state-level assessment policies as described in the state documents.

1. Regulatory – the policy is designed to encourage/ensure compliance with regulations; resources may be distributed, in part, based on successful compliance. This differs somewhat from Lowi's definition of a regulatory policy, which calls for a choice between "who will be indulged and who [will be] deprived." (Lowi, 1964)
2. Reforming – the policy is designed to encourage/ensure reform of some type.
3. Quality assurance – the policy is designed to assure quality.
4. Accountability – the policy is designed to make institutions accountable to some higher authority, typically the governor and state legislature.

The policy stage

The third question we address is: What is the policy stage? Palumbo describes five stages in his policy cycle: "first, an issue gets placed onto the policy-making agenda, which means it becomes a problem that is dealt with by a governmental agency, such as a legislature, court, or administrative agency; second, the issue is discussed, defined, and a decision is made whether to take action with regard to that issue – this is the policy formation stage; third, the action or decision is given to an administrative agency to be implemented; fourth, the actions taken by the administrative agencies are evaluated to determine what impact they have on the intended audiences and clientele; and fifth, policies may be terminated if they lose political support, are found not to be achieving their goals, are too costly, or for some other reasons. In addition, there are sub-loops running from implementation and evaluation to formulation because policies often are adjusted based on knowledge about their actual impact and shortcomings" (Palumbo, 1988, p. 7).

Another system of stages was developed by Steele and Lutz (1995), which was in turn, derived from McClain, Krueger, and Kongas (1989). Steele and Lutz rates policy on a scale from 0 to 4. A score of 0 meant the state had "no clear commitment or mandate to initiate an assessment program"; 1 meant the state was in the planning/startup stage; 2 indicated the state was implementing an assessment program; 3 meant the state had reached the stage of utilization/acceptance of assessment and its results; and 4 meant the state was committed to assessment, "reflecting integration of assessment into decision making and changes processes." Anderson and his colleagues (1984) established stages similar to Palumbo's. For the purposes of our framework, we used the following six stages established by Anderson et al. (1984).

6 stages selected

1. Problem formation – relief is sought from a situation that produces a human need, deprivation, or dissatisfaction.
2. Policy agenda – problems, among many, that receive the government's serious attention.
3. Policy formulation – development of pertinent and acceptable proposed courses of action for dealing with public problems.
4. Policy adoption – development of support for a specific proposal such that the policy is legitimized or authorized.
5. Policy implementation – application of the policy by the government's bureaucratic machinery to the problem.
6. Policy evaluation – attempt by the government to determine whether or not the policy has been effective.

problem formation
policy agenda
policy formulation
policy adoption
policy implementation
policy evaluation

Policy-related data

Our analyses also includes the following important policy relevant information for each state:

- recommended or mandated guidelines for campuses;
- programs and/or staff positions created at state and/or institutional level to work with assessment;
- list of indicators/outcomes measured;
- names of assessment instruments mandated or recommended;
- specific language pertaining to teaching and learning elements within the policies and procedures;
- requirements for public reporting;
- state and institutional budgets for assessment;
- regional accreditation association affiliation;
- relationship between state and regional accreditation association;
- relationship with disciplinary accreditation associations;
- presence, or lack, of statewide database[4]; and
- focus on technology.

FINDINGS FROM STATES

A complete detailed analysis for each of the 50 states is found in Appendix A. Each state's original assessment initiative is listed in Table 2 along with the year it was enacted. New Jersey and Tennessee led the way with their initiatives in the late 1970s, but it took another 10 years for a majority of states to implement a policy. Nearly a fifth of the states did not implement a policy until the 1990s. Four states (Delaware, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Vermont) have no assessment initiatives at the state or system level.

Table 2
Name of Original State Assessment Policy and Year Initiated

State	Original Initiative	Year of Original Initiative
Alabama	Statewide Policy on Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes	1988
Alaska	Educational Effectiveness Policy	1996
Arizona	Regents' Annual Report	1987
Arkansas	Act 98	1989
California	Higher Education Assessment Act	1990
Colorado	Higher Education Accountability Program Act	1985
Connecticut	Strategic Plan	1988
Delaware	none	none
Florida	College-level Academic Skills Test (CLAST)	1982

[4] This information was provided by Russell (1995) Advances in Statewide Higher Education Data Systems.

Georgia	Planning Policy	1989
Hawaii	Executive E5.210	1989
Idaho	Governing Policies and Procedures on Outcomes Assessment	1988
Illinois	Recommendations of the Committee on the Study of Undergraduate Education	1986
Indiana	State-level performance objectives	1984
Iowa	Regents Policy on Student Outcomes Assessment	1991
Kansas	Assessment Policy	1988
Kentucky	Accountability Enhancement Program	1992
Louisiana	Act 237	1993
Maine	Planning Goals	1986
Maryland	Reorganization of Maryland Higher Education Act	1988
Massachusetts	Performance Measurement System	1997
Michigan	none	none
Minnesota	Postsecondary Quality Assessment	1987
Mississippi	Trustees' Policies and Bylaws	n/a
Missouri	Value-Added Assessment Program (NE MO St. U.)	early 1980s
Montana	Proficiency Admission Requirements and Developmental Education	n/a
Nebraska	Program Review	1994
Nevada	Regents' Assessment Policy	1989
New Hampshire	none	none
New Jersey	Basic Skills Assessment Program (BASP)	1977
New Mexico	Strategic Plan and Report Card	1990
New York	Commissioner's Regulations	n/a
North Carolina	Assessment Reports	1989
North Dakota	Strategic Plan	1996
Ohio	State Bill 140	1989
Oklahoma	Regents Policy	1991
Oregon	Oregon Assessment Model	1993
Pennsylvania	none	none
Rhode Island	Board of Governors' Policy on Quality in Higher Education, Program, and Institutional Review Processes	1986
South Carolina	Act 629	1988
South Dakota	Assessment Policy	1984
Tennessee	Performance Funding	1979
Texas	Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP)	1987
Utah	HB 37 Assessment Policy	1992
Vermont	none	none
Virginia	Assessment Program	1986
Washington	Assessment Policy	1989
West Virginia	Assessment Policy	1987
Wisconsin	Accountability Policy	1993
Wyoming	n/a	n/a

n/a indicates information currently unavailable

Policy type/stage

The policy context section of each state's analysis includes a description of the original, as well as any updating legislation (see Appendix A). In some cases the focus and nature of a state's assessment policies and practices have evolved since their initiation. The current policy type and stage for each state is presented in Table 3. Approximately half of the states have policies designed to both ensure quality and make institutions accountable to a higher authority, be it governor, state legislature, or the coordinating or governing board. Nine states have policies which focus exclusively on quality assurance; five emphasize accountability. We categorized one state each as a combination of accountability/reforming (Indiana), quality assurance/regulatory (New Mexico), and quality assurance/distributive (North Carolina).

The states are in different stages with regard to their assessment initiatives as Table 3 illustrates. Nearly half are in the process of implementing their policy; one-fifth are evaluating and reformulating their course of action. Colorado is formulating a new course of action having instituted a new statute in 1995. Tennessee is in a constant cycle of ongoing implementation and evaluation. Ohio is implementing its policy at the two-year level, while formulating its course of action for the four-year institutions.

Table 3
Current State Assessment Policy Type and Stage

State	Current Policy Type	Current Policy Stage
Alabama	accountability; quality assurance	implementation (of Act 96-577)
Alaska	quality assurance	implementation
Arizona	accountability; regulatory	implementation
Arkansas	n/a	n/a
California	accountability; quality assurance	implementation
Colorado	accountability; regulatory; quality assurance	formulation (of performance funding policy)
Connecticut	quality assurance	implementation
Delaware	none	none
Florida	accountability; regulatory; quality assurance	evaluation and reformulation
Georgia	quality assurance	implementation
Hawaii	accountability; quality assurance	implementation
Idaho	quality assurance	evaluation and reformulation
Illinois	quality assurance	evaluation and reformulation
Indiana	accountability; reforming	evaluation and reformulation
Iowa	quality assurance	implementation
Kansas	accountability; quality assurance	evaluation
Kentucky	accountability; regulatory; quality assurance	implementation
Louisiana	accountability; quality assurance	implementation
Maine	none	none

Maryland	accountability; quality assurance	implementation
Massachusetts	accountability; quality assurance	implementation
Michigan	none	none
Minnesota	accountability; regulatory	adoption
Mississippi	accountability	implementation
Missouri	accountability; regulatory; quality assurance	evaluation and reformulation
Montana	accountability; quality assurance	implementation
Nebraska	accountability; quality assurance	evaluation and reformulation
Nevada	quality assurance	evaluation and reformulation
New Hampshire	none	none
New Jersey	accountability	implementation
New Mexico	quality assurance	implementation
New York	quality assurance	implementation
North Carolina	quality assurance	evaluation and reformulation
North Dakota	accountability	implementation
Ohio	accountability; regulatory; quality assurance	implementation; formulation (of performance indicators for four-year institutions)
Oklahoma	accountability; quality assurance	evaluation and reformulation
Oregon	accountability; quality assurance	implementation
Pennsylvania	none	none
Rhode Island	accountability; quality assurance	implementation
South Carolina	accountability; regulatory; quality assurance	implementation; adoption (of 100% performance funding policy)
South Dakota	accountability; quality assurance	implementation
Tennessee	accountability; regulatory; quality assurance	ongoing implementation and evaluation
Texas	accountability; quality assurance	implementation
Utah	accountability; quality assurance	evaluation and reformulation
Vermont	none	none
Virginia	accountability; quality assurance	evaluation and reformulation
Washington	accountability; quality assurance	evaluation and reformulation
West Virginia	quality assurance	implementation
Wisconsin	accountability; quality assurance	implementation
Wyoming	n/a	n/a

n/a indicates information currently unavailable

Measurement use

Whether states mandate common instruments for assessment and mandate common indicators and/or outcomes across their institutions is captured in Table 4. Currently, eight states (Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas) indicate their use of common instruments to measure outcomes and Colorado is currently considering use of common instruments. Kentucky and Missouri use common instruments (NTE and Praxis II) to assess the preparedness of their K-12 teacher candidates. Florida, Georgia, North and South Carolina and Texas have constructed their own instruments, while Tennessee uses a commercially-developed product.

Seventeen states expect common indicators and/or outcomes to be measured across their institutions; five states have a mix of common and varied indicators and outcomes. Twelve states submitted that their institutions used varied indicators and outcomes. Ten states made no mention of indicators or outcomes.

Table 4
State Assessment Instruments and Indicators/Outcomes

State	Instruments of Assessment Mandated as Common	Assessment Indicators/Outcomes
Alabama	none	vary by institution
Alaska	none	none
Arizona	none	common
Arkansas	n/a	n/a
California	none	common
Colorado	under consideration	under consideration
Connecticut	none	none
Delaware	none	none
Florida	CLAST; entry-level placement tests; survey	one common set for four-year institutions; another common set for two-year institutions
Georgia	Regents' Exam; Comprehensive Performance Exam	vary by institution and institutional type
Hawaii	none	common
Idaho	none	common
Illinois	none	vary by institution
Indiana	none	common
Iowa	none	vary by institution
Kansas	none	vary by program and by institution
Kentucky	Praxis II for teacher education	common
Louisiana	none	vary by institution
Maine	none	vary by institution
Maryland	none	common
Massachusetts	none	none
Michigan	none	none
Minnesota	none	one common set for each system
Mississippi	none	none
Missouri	NTE and C-Base for teacher education	some common; some varied
Montana	none	n/a
Nebraska	none	common
Nevada	none	vary by institution
New Hampshire	none	vary by institution
New Jersey	none	common
New Mexico	none	common
New York	none	common
North Carolina	survey	some common; some varied
North Dakota	none	none
Ohio	none	common for two-year institutions

Oklahoma	none	some common; some varied
Oregon	none	common
Pennsylvania	none	none
Rhode Island	none	common
South Carolina	survey	common
South Dakota	none	vary by institution
Tennessee	ACT-COMP or C-BASE	common
Texas	TASP	n/a
Utah	none	some common; some varied
Vermont	none	none
Virginia	none	vary by program and by institution
Washington	none	vary by institution
West Virginia	none	vary by institution
Wisconsin	none	some common; some varied
Wyoming	n/a	n/a

n/a indicates information currently unavailable

Authority/agency

Whether the state's assessment initiatives were guided by legislative or other means and the type of state higher education agency is illustrated in Table 5. Twelve of the states have statutes, meaning that their assessment initiative is for the most part guided by legislative means, usually a bill is passed by the state legislature that directs an executive board or agency to establish a policy. Twenty-one states have policies, indicating that assessment is for the most part guided by non-legislative means, usually an executive policy promulgated by a state higher education governing board or agency. Eight states had both statutes and policies shaping their assessment initiatives. Five states have no state-level assessment activity.

State structure type or authority of the governance structure (McGuinness, Epper, & Arredondo, 1994) illustrated in Table 5 demonstrates that 21 states are governed by coordinating/regulatory boards, 21 by consolidated governing boards, six by planning agencies, and four by coordinating advisory boards.

Table 5
Assessment Activity Type and Authority of State Agency

State	Policy, Statute or Combination	Authority of State Agency
Alabama	policy	coordinating/regulatory
Alaska	policy	consolidated governing
Arizona	combination	consolidated governing
Arkansas	n/a	coordinating/regulatory
California	statute	coordinating/advisory
Colorado	statute	coordinating/regulatory
Connecticut	statute	coordinating/regulatory
Delaware	none	planning
Florida	statute	consolidated governing

Georgia	policy	consolidated governing
Hawaii	policy	consolidated governing
Idaho	policy	consolidated governing
Illinois	policy	coordinating/regulatory
Indiana	statute	coordinating/regulatory
Iowa	policy	consolidated governing
Kansas	policy	consolidated governing
Kentucky	statute	coordinating/regulatory
Louisiana	statute	coordinating/regulatory
Maine	policy	consolidated governing
Maryland	statute	coordinating/regulatory
Massachusetts	combination	coordinating/regulatory
Michigan	none	planning
Minnesota	statute	coordinating/advisory
Mississippi	policy	consolidated governing
Missouri	combination	coordinating/regulatory
Montana	policy	consolidated governing
Nebraska	statute	coordinating/regulatory
Nevada	policy	consolidated governing
New Hampshire	none	planning
New Jersey	combination	coordinating/regulatory
New Mexico	combination	coordinating/advisory
New York	policy	coordinating/regulatory
North Carolina	statute	consolidated governing
North Dakota	policy	consolidated governing
Ohio	combination	coordinating/regulatory
Oklahoma	policy	coordinating/regulatory
Oregon	policy	planning
Pennsylvania	none	coordinating/advisory
Rhode Island	policy	consolidated governing
South Carolina	statute	coordinating/regulatory
South Dakota	policy	consolidated governing
Tennessee	statute	coordinating/regulatory
Texas	combination	coordinating/regulatory
Utah	statute	consolidated governing
Vermont	none	planning
Virginia	combination	coordinating/regulatory
Washington	policy	coordinating/regulatory
West Virginia	combination	consolidated governing
Wisconsin	policy	consolidated governing
Wyoming	n/a	consolidated governing

n/a indicates information currently unavailable

Each state's pattern of sharing information with its public and its ability to gather, organize, and analyze information from each of its institutions via a state-computerized database is portrayed by the information contained in Table 6. Twenty-three of the states require annual, five biennial, and one triennial reporting of assessment findings. In three states public reporting is voluntary (Connecticut, Minnesota, and Rhode Island); in two it is cyclical. California indicates it uses systemic reporting.

State-level governing and coordinating boards have been collecting higher education data since their inception. The development of institutional and statewide computerized data systems has facilitated the sharing and comparing of data from multiple institutions. Table 6 contains data gathered by Russell (1995) which characterizes the higher education data systems in each state. As indicated, more than half of the states have comprehensive statewide databases containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions. Only five states indicate they have no multi-institutional database.

Table 6
Frequency of Public Reporting and Availability of Database Within State

State	Public Reporting	State Database
Alabama	voluntary	1
Alaska	annual	1
Arizona	annual	4
Arkansas	annual	1
California	systemic	1
Colorado	annual	1
Connecticut	voluntary	1
Delaware	none	5
Florida	annual	3
Georgia	annual	1
Hawaii	annual	1
Idaho	annual	1
Illinois	voluntary	1
Indiana	biennial	1
Iowa	annual	5
Kansas	none	5
Kentucky	annual	1
Louisiana	annual	1
Maine	periodic	1
Maryland	annual	1
Massachusetts	annual	n/a
Michigan	none	5
Minnesota	voluntary	1
Mississippi	none	2
Missouri	annual	1

Montana	none	5
Nebraska	annual	5
Nevada	none	1
New Hampshire	none	1
New Jersey	annual	1
New Mexico	annual	1
New York	cyclical	3
North Carolina	cyclical	1
North Dakota	cyclical	1
Ohio	annual	1
Oklahoma	annual	1
Oregon	annual	2
Pennsylvania	none	4
Rhode Island	voluntary	5
South Carolina	annual	1
South Dakota	annual	2
Tennessee	annual	1
Texas	annual	1
Utah	biennial	1
Vermont	none	2
Virginia	biennial	1
Washington	annual	2
West Virginia	periodic	1
Wisconsin	triennial	1
Wyoming	n/a	n/a

1= comprehensive statewide database at the SHEEO level
2= non-comprehensive statewide database at the SHEEO level
3= multi-institutional database, not at SHEEO level
4= limited multi-institutional database
5= no multi-institutional database (Russell, 1995)
n/a indicates information currently unavailable

Funding incentives

Funding for assessment activities appears to remain the primary responsibility of the individual institutions. A majority of the policy documents give no indication of the availability of state funding support or use of funding as an incentive for institutional assessment activities. (See Table 7). Noteworthy exceptions include Missouri, where the 1997 Funding For Results Program earmarked as incentive funding $2 million for two-year and $10.6 million for four-year institutions. In Tennessee $25-30 million is awarded each year through the Performance Funding Policy. Ohio recently allocated $1.5 million to two-year institutions as part of its performance funding policy.

Table 7

State Financial Incentives and Consequences Tied to Assessment

State	Financial Incentives and Consequences
Alabama	Institutions pay for assessment activities through regular appropriations
Alaska	Funding for assessment is included in 1996 budget request
Arizona	n/a
Arkansas	n/a
California	State constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for costs incurred by state-mandated activities (e.g., assessment)
Colorado	The state is currently determining what percentage of appropriations will be linked to performance indicators
Connecticut	n/a
Delaware	n/a
Florida	n/a
Georgia	Regents' policy says that each institution shall link its major budget alloca tions and other major academic and administrative decisions to its planning and assessment process
Hawaii	n/a
Idaho	first-year assessment planning costs were borne by institutions
Illinois	Total reinvestment of funds under Priorities, Quality, and Productivity (PQP) initiative was $153.6 million; $27.5 million of this was designated for improvement of undergraduate education
Indiana	n/a
Iowa	n/a
Kansas	n/a
Kentucky	n/a
Louisiana	n/a
Maine	some funds were appropriated by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs in 1988, 1989, and 1990
Maryland	n/a
Massachusetts	n/a
Michigan	n/a
Minnesota	The legislature placed $5,000,000 in the performance incentive accounts for both systems, for a total of $10,000,000
Mississippi	n/a
Missouri	For 1997 Funding for Results (FFR), $2 million went to two-year institu tions and $10.6 million went to four-year institutions
Montana	n/a
Nebraska	n/a
Nevada	n/a
New Hampshire	n/a
New Jersey	n/a
New Mexico	n/a
New York	n/a
North Carolina	n/a
North Dakota	n/a
Ohio	In 1996, the Regents allocated $1.5 million to two-year institutions as part of its performance funding policy

Oklahoma	Each institution is permitted to charge a fee for the purpose of conduct ing institutional and programmatic assessment. This fee can be no more than one dollar per credit hour
Oregon	State has used "small amounts of incentive funds ($200,000/biennium) to urge campuses to participate in collaborative assessment projects."
Pennsylvania	n/a
Puerto Rico	n/a
Rhode Island	n/a
South Carolina	Not clear what percentage of appropriations formula is determined by performance indicators for 1997 and 1998, but the formula will be 100% indicator-driven by 1999
Tennessee	$25 to $30 million is awarded each year through the Performance Funding Policy
Texas	n/a
Utah	n/a
Vermont	n/a
Virginia	An average of $12 per student was appropriated to institutions for assessment
Washington	State funding for assessment has been available since the 1989-91 biennium when $400,000 was given for assessment activities at each of the six four-year institutions and to the State Board of Community Colleges. In 1990 supplemental funds of $60,000 per institution was given to the 27 community colleges. Total funding levels for public four-year institutions, community colleges and technical institutions have remained relatively constant for each successive biennium budget. The Community Colleges and Technical System Governing Board has funding to coordinate assessment activities, while the Higher Education Coordinating Board does not.
West Virginia	"West Virginia governing boards have allocated approximately $15,000 annually for state-wide assessment programs and materials. However, the primary responsibility for funding assessment has been borne by the campuses."
Wisconsin	n/a
Wyoming	n/a

n/a=information currently not applicable

DISCUSSION OF STATE FINDINGS

Three themes

implications
relationships
use of incentives

This section will discuss three themes emanating from the patterns and trends captured in our data:

- the extent and implications of state use of common assessment practices;
- the relationships between state assessment policies and governance structures;
- the use of incentives and consequences in assessment policies.

Some commonality

Trend may assist legislatures to compare across institutions.

The extent to which states have been moving toward the use of common indicators and common instruments has been examined previously (ACT, 1995; NCHEMS, 1996). Our analysis of the state documents for the most part confirms what these previous studies found: that 17 states currently have common indicators and that eight states use common instruments. Whether this constitutes a genuine trend toward commonality, either in terms of indictors or instruments, is a judgment call. Indeed, making a statement about trends in state assessment policies is difficult because it has only been during the last decade that assessment has become an issue at the state level, and spotting a trend over such a relatively short period of time is a challenge.

But if there is a trend toward common indicators and instruments, what does it mean? Perhaps for some state legislatures, commonality in expectations and measurements is one way to facilitate comparisons across institutions. In New Mexico, for example, the state legislature passed a law requiring the State Commission on Higher Education to compile an "annual report card," consisting of a variety of measures taken from all public institutions. The purpose of this "report card" was explicitly comparative: "The indicators [of performance] are to be published annually in order to draw comparisons among school districts and among institutions of higher learning." (Annual Report Card Act of 1990).

Institutions resist application of comparative instruments.

Institutions, however, have been quick to resist intra-state comparison. In New Mexico, the report card requirement was dropped because of criticism from institutions, which stated that the "diversity of New Mexico's institutions, missions, and students" make such comparative tools "unreliable" or "only minimally indicative of institutional performance." Institutions and boards in other states, perhaps sensing the comparative potential of common indicators and instruments, have asserted their own uniqueness and offered similar arguments against the validity of such comparisons.

In California the state Postsecondary Education Commission acknowledged in its 1996 report that the "breadth and complexity of California public higher education make the development of measures of performance that are comparable across systems very challenging." In Georgia the assessment policy allows for the fact that assessment procedures may differ from institution to institution. Idaho's Board of Education makes it very clear that assessment "should not be used to compare institutions." In Illinois, the state Board of Higher Education has been reluctant to make assessment practices uniform. Instead, the state's approach to assessment of students "is to call upon institutions to develop appropriate assessment programs rather than develop some sort of statewide assessment test or common set of indicators." Iowa, Nevada, and Oklahoma are also among the states that recognize diversity of institutions, missions, and students. If, indeed, some states are looking at common indicators and instruments as a good way to draw comparisons between institutions, there is certainly no shortage of institutions and boards that have resisted (and, in the case of New Mexico, repealed) the use of such tools for comparative purposes.

What is measured?

students at entry
students at exit
licensing scores
student satisfaction
employer satisfaction

While this study and others (NCHEMS, 1996) have examined the extent to which states have begun using common instruments, this study has also looked beyond the commonality of instruments to the more fundamental question of what these common instruments actually measure. In some cases, instruments (particularly standardized tests) are used at or near the time of a student's entry to college as opposed to a student's exit. For example, Florida's CLAST was implemented, in part, "to ensure that college students...entering the upper division at a state university possess basic or essential skills deemed necessary for success." Florida also administers a common entry-level placement exam to incoming freshmen at two- and four-year institutions. In Texas, the TASP (Texas Academic Skills Program) exam is adminstered to entering college freshmen to determine if students can read, write, and compute "at levels needed to perform effectively in higher education." Some states also refer to the use of the SAT or ACT as means of assessing students at entry.

There are a handful of states that use standardized tests as common instruments to measure students' performance upon exit from college. Tennessee, for example, uses the ACT-COMP and/or C-BASE as means of evaluating a student's general education program. South Dakota also uses the ACT-COMP to assess the achievement of students in the general education component of the baccalaureate curriculum. There also seems to be growing interest in use of common standardized instruments in teacher education programs. In Missouri, a statewide administrative rule mandates the use of C-BASE and NTE for admission to and exit from teacher education programs. Kentucky uses the scores of teacher education program graduates on the multiple-choice component of all Praxis II subject area exams and compares their scores to the national averages, as means of measuring the preparation of K-12 teachers.

More broadly speaking, many states use students' scores on professional licensure and certification exams in a variety of areas as instruments of assessment, though these are not often mandated as common. More often, states turn to surveys measuring the satisfaction — both of students and their employers — for assessment purposes. If states are moving toward common instruments, then it will be interesting to observe whether they choose to measure their students at entry, exit, or both. The measurements at entry (like CLAST and TASP) are largely a reflection on the quality of elementary and secondary school systems, while measurements at exit (Like ACT-COMP and C-BASE) are more of a reflection of the quality of the postsecondary institutions.

Perhaps colleges and universities will resist attempts to impose common instruments to measure exit performance of their students for the same reasons they resist drawing comparisons across institutions: institutions have different missions and different students. For some institutions, common, standardized measurements of exit-performance might be invaluable or worse, misleading. Further it is easier, at least intuitively, to assess entry rather than exit because students come to college with what is, for the most part, a similar educational back-

ground from grades K-12. They do not, however, exit college with the same degree of similarity. In some states, even the general education core differs dramatically from institution to institution, not to mention major field of study and elective courses. Common instruments would fail to account for these differences.

Role of governance

Study finds that policies are more prevalent than statutes as guide for assessment activities.

The effect of governance structure type on state higher education policy is a relatively new and unexplored area. Hearn, Griswold, and Marine (1996) examined what role governance structure played in the formulation of state tuition and financial aid policy. Hearn and Griswold (1994) looked at the degree to which the centralization of a state's governance structure affected postsecondary policy innovation. Given the significance of assessment as a policy issue in most states, it seems reasonable to consider also what impact, if any, governance structure type has on states' assessment activities.

In order to do this, this study first categorized state assessment activities in one of three ways: statute, policy, or a combination of both. For the purposes of this study, a state is said to have a policy if its assessment activities are, for the most part, guided by non-legislative means, usually an executive policy promulgated by a state higher education governing board or agency. A state is said to have a statute if its assessment activities are, for the most part, guided by legislative means, usually a bill passed by the state legislature that directs an executive board or agency to establish a policy. A state is said to have a combination if its assessment activities are guided by a combination of both policy and statute. Usually, a statute is passed and a policy is established to implement the statute, but the statute retains its significance.

Based on this categorization, this study found that 12 states had statutes, 21 states had policies, 8 states had combinations, and 5 states with no state-level assessment activity. (Four states did not respond to the request for information.) These categories were then juxtaposed with the patterns of state higher education governance structure developed by McGuinness, Epper, and Arredondo (1994).

As Table 5 illustrates, of the 23 states with consolidated governing boards, 15 had assessment policies, three had assessment statutes, two had combinations, and two did not have any state-level assessment activity. (One of these 23 states did not respond.) Of the 21 states with coordinating boards with regulatory authority, six had policies, seven had statutes, five had combinations, and three did not respond. Of the six states with coordinating boards with advisory capacity, three had statutes, one had a policy, one had a combination, and one did not have state-level assessment activity. Finally, of the five states with planning agencies, four did not have any state-level assessment activity, and one state had a policy.

Related to powers

The relative authority of these boards decreases in this order: governing board; coordinating board with regulatory authority; coordinating board with advisory capacity; and planning agency. (Ibid.) Given this, the juxtaposition of the

type of governance structure with the type of assessment activity reveals some interesting relationships, which may or may not be cause-and-effect. For example, of the 23 states with consolidated governing boards, 15, or 66%, had policies. At the other end of the authority spectrum, of five states with planning agencies, four, or 80%, had no state-level assessment activity. Intuitively, a planning agency has the least authority of the four structures proposed by McGuinness et al., and thus is the least likely to be engaged in assessment activity. One future direction of our research will be to examine these relationships.

Use of incentives

Five states use incentives for performance while three move in that direction

One of the most compelling aspects of state-level assessment has been the use of financial incentives and consequences as a means of assessment or a means of encouraging assessment activity. A 1996 report prepared by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education as part of that state's performance funding movement offered an overview of performance funding by state. As of July, 1996, five states – Arkansas, Florida, Missouri, Ohio, and Tennessee – had implemented performance funding, and three states – Colorado, Kentucky, and South Carolina – were moving quickly in that direction (SCCHE, 1996). In addition to these states, our study found that Arizona has a performance funding system as a result of the Budget Reform Act passed by that state's legislature in 1993. This law requires performance funding for all state programs, including higher education. Minnesota also has two sets of five performance measures, one for the University of Minnesota and another for the Minnesota State College and University System. For each performance measure an institution fulfills, it will receive $1 million, for a maximum possible total of $5 million. At the time of this report, however, funds have not been released pending the performance reports from the systems.

Beyond the use of performance funding, four states – Oregon, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia – have separate budget lines for assessment activities. Oregon provides $200,000 for institutions engaged in "collaborative assessment." Virginia gives institutions an average of $12 per student for assessment purposes, while Washington and West Virginia appropriate a certain amount of funds annually.

Two states – Oklahoma and South Dakota – permit their institutions to charge students a fee for assessment activities. In Oklahoma, institutions can charge no more than $1 per credit hour; in South Dakota, the fee can be no higher than $0.25 per credit hour. One state – California – is constitutionally required to reimburse institutions for costs incurred while carrying out state-mandated activity, of which assessment is an example.

Four approaches

Based on these findings, it seems there are at least four types of approaches to using financial incentives and consequences across states: (1) states with performance funding; (2) states with budget lines for assessment activities; (3) states that allow institutions to charge fees to students for assessment purposes; and (4)

states that reimburse institutions for assessment activities. One of our future research agendas will be to ascertain why states choose the policy approaches that they are currently implementing.

Some questions

Need to explore relationship between type of governance and incentive use.

To this end, another interesting observation we made based on state documents is the intersection between the second and third themes of this discussion: the relationship between governance structure type and the use of performance funding. For example, of the 10 states that either currently have performance funding measures or are considering adopting such measures, only two – Arizona and Florida – have governing boards.

Interestingly, the remaining eight states all have regulatory coordinating boards. Do governing boards resist the use of performance funding because they see it as an infringement on their authority? Is performance funding, especially when mandated by a state legislature, really an infringement on board authority? What is it about coordinating boards with regulatory authority that is conducive to performance funding? Do other factors, such as the political climate and the public demand for greater accountability, affect the likelihood of a state to use performance funding? All of these questions will inform our construction of the survey we will distribute to SHEEOs and other state-level higher education policymakers.

Value of findings

Perhaps the most important observation to make regarding assessment is that states define assessment differently based on their own individual assessment needs and goals, and these differences in definition result in a variety of policies and practices. Given this variety, the overall purpose of this state analysis has been three-fold: (1) to introduce and explicate a new policy analysis framework that may facilitate a comparative discussion of state-level assessment policies and practices; (2) to provide, in the form of six tables, a concise visual summary of the information gathered and discussed in greater detail in the individual state templates; and (3) to elucidate three very broad, comparative themes this study has discovered in its review of state assessment policies and practices.

The value of this study is its approach. This study "worked backwards" and developed the analytical framework and template based on what we were seeing in the state documents. This is in contrast to administering an instrument designed to capture specific, pre-determined dimensions of assessment. Our initial request for documents relating to assessment policies and practices was open-ended and somewhat ambiguous by design, so that states would be inclined to send "too much" information rather than "too little." Once we had this information, however, we could categorize and quantify it as we wanted; we were not tied to the pre-existing limits and boundaries of a survey instrument. In the end, we believe this approach, while it may have been "messier" and perhaps required more work, has enabled us to offer a genuinely comparative summary and analysis

of assessment activities at the state level to an audience with diverse interests and perspectives on assessment issues.

Of course, this report is only the beginning. Based on our findings, and the comments and suggestions of those who read this report, Year Two of our research will involve a more focused approach to the analysis of state-level assessment activities. This approach will consist of a survey informed by the data already collected and the conclusions already drawn. Ultimately, this research will be of use to the various participants in the state policy-making process as they continue to work toward a fair, efficient, and valid system of assessment.

ACCREDITATION ASSOCIATION POLICIES & PRACTICES

Analysis approach

Documents describing the assessment practices and policies of the six regional accreditation associations were gathered, analyzed, and organized into individual analytic frameworks which can be found in Appendix B. Because the primary purpose of this data collection was to discover what policies exist and the emphases these policies give to improving student learning and achievement, the frameworks provide an overview of the associations' focus on assessment for learning and teaching improvement and highlight the following specific information:

- specific policies and practices emphasizing students, student learning and teaching;
- kinds of outcomes measured and processes used;
- emphasis on institutional accountability, as well as autonomy.

These policies and practices paint only part of the picture of accrediting associations' efforts to facilitate institutional effectiveness. In order to garner as broad an understanding as possible of how the accrediting associations have engaged in improving faculty teaching and student learning, the following information was also included in the framework:

- relationship of association to state higher education department, council or coordinating boards;
- association's efforts to evaluate its assessment program;
- materials the association provides to guide its member institutions and association efforts to train accrediting teams;
- identification of who is involved in assessment at the institution;
- and, emphases on issues of technology use and development and diversity.

Assessment forms

Assessment of student learning and teaching emerged as a focus of the accreditation associations between the mid 1980s and early 1990s. The logical next question is what form has outcomes assessment taken? According to the accreditation associations, how should institutions approach assessing student

learning and teaching effectiveness? What evidence should be gathered; what means are to be used?

Neither processes nor a single set of outcomes are mandated by any of the regional associations

Without exception what the associations mandate is documentation of institutionally identified outcomes and analysis of those outcomes, as well as demonstration of action following from the analysis. But as Table 8 illustrates, specific processes are not required, nor is an identified single or set of outcomes. Rather some domains and processes are "highlighted."

Table 8
Regional Association "Highlighted" Outcome Measures and Assessment Processes

Regional Association	Measures	Processes
Middle States Association	multiple: cognitive abilities, information literacy, integration and application	varied - qualitative and quantitative
New England Association	multiple: cognitive, behavioral, and affective learning	varied - qualitative and quantitative
North Central Association	multiple: cognitive, behavioral, and affective	varied - direct and indirect - qualitative and quantitative
Northwest Association	multiple: problem solving, analysis, synthesis, making judgment, reasoning, communicating	varied
Southern Association	multiple: major field and general education achievement, affective development	varied - qualitative and quantitative
Western Association	multiple: effective communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking	varied - qualitative and quantitative

According to North Central Association's recently revised Criteria Three and Four an appropriate assessment program is one that "will **document** (its emphasis) proficiency in skills and competencies essential for all college-educated adults; completion of an identifiable and coherent undergraduate level general education component; and mastery of the level of knowledge appropriate to the degree attained." It remains up to the institution to define those skills and competencies. NCA provides some greater direction in the 1996 report, *Opportunities for Improvement*, where the association recommends that institutions determine the extent to which they contribute to student learning within three domains: cognitive, behavioral, and affective.

WASC cites effective communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking and other competencies judged essential by the institutions as possible outcomes to be considered. Middle States lists as measures of student achievement cognitive abilities, content literacy, competence in information management skills and value awareness. Clearly some of the associations guide their member institutions in their contemplation of desired learning outcomes, but none has established a mandated list.

Formats optional

In terms of process or approach to assessment, the associations' expectations are similarly broad. Assessment is to be ongoing and incremental and longitudinal multi-measure studies are thought to produce more meaningful results. Use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches is considered important. Most associations provide a broad list of possible approaches (e.g. alumni and employer surveys, course and professor evaluations, student satisfaction inventories, course completion rates) from which institutions can choose.

Guidance for the assessment of instructional processes is equally as broad, and at best, indirectly addressed. For Middle States teaching is clearly a part of the teaching-learning improvement loop used to illustrate the inter-linking of assessment and institutional improvement, and yet only minimal mention is made of how instruction is assessed. Faculty peer evaluation is the only approach listed among possible methods of determining instructional program quality.

SACS (1996) states that "methods of instruction must be appropriate for the goals of each course and the capabilities of the students...and methods of evaluating teaching effectiveness must be varied and may include use of standardized tests and comprehensive examinations, assessment of the performance of graduate in advanced programs or employment" (Criteria for Accreditation. p. 30-31).

WASC's Task Force on the Role of Accreditation in the Assessment of Student Learning and Teaching Effectiveness (1995) captures what may characterize the approach of most of the associations to assessing teaching effectiveness. They state the clear need to more meaningfully explore and connect the relationship between teaching effectiveness and student learning, while simultaneously acknowledging that this has been an area that has been overlooked and understudied. The dearth of attention to assessment of teaching found in the association materials may be thus explained.

As Table 9 illustrates, those responsible for the campus assessment efforts vary by association, but typically faculty are listed. Support and involvement of other campus constituencies in the assessment effort are left to the discretion of each institution.

Table 9
Association Expectation for Who Will Conduct Campus Assessment

Regional Association	Responsibility for Campus Assessment Effort
Middle States Association	faculty, administrators, students
New England Association	individuals and groups responsible for achieving institutional purposes
North Central Association	faculty with institutional support from governing board, president and senior executive officers
Northwest Association	faculty
Southern Association	president and appropriate constituent groups
Western Association	faculty

Autonomy stressed

Elliott (1983) posits that institutions have the right to expect four constants in their relationship with their accreditation associations: clear standards, guidance for improvement, protection from fraudulent and improper practices, and preservation of institutional autonomy. All six regional associations either implicitly or explicitly acknowledge that the distinct and diverse purposes and goals of their member institutions demand equally diverse assessment approaches and processes. For instance, according to WASC, "member institutions are in the best position to define their standards for student learning, teaching, effectiveness." Middle States holds that "it is an institution's prerogative to determine how best to implement assessment." This commitment to preservation of institutional distinctiveness and autonomy provides perhaps the best explanation for why the outcomes measured and processes used by the six regional associations are so broadly defined.

Links to the states

Stevens and Hamlett (1983) and Bender (1983) have noted that the states abrogated their responsibility for gauging institutional effectiveness by either ignoring the issue or passing it to the accrediting associations, raising among other questions, what has been the convergence of state and accreditation association policies and the resulting influences on assessment practices. In the second half of the twentieth century as the states began to take greater interest in and responsibility for institutional regulation and oversight, an accommodating and often cooperative relationship between state agencies and the accrediting associations emerged (Bender, 1983).

An analysis of the accreditation (See Table 10) and state (see Table 11) policy documents indicates that over one-third of the states mention a relationship with either their regional accrediting and/or disciplinary/professional accrediting associations, while four of the regional accrediting associations (MSACS, NCACS, NEAS&C, SACS) explicitly mention a relationship with the state higher education agencies in their regions. The relationships range from formal policies directing communication between the accrediting association and state coordinating and governing boards to more informal communication links between state and accrediting agency.

Table 10
Relationship with State Agencies as Reported by Regional Accreditation Associations

Regional Association	Relationship with State Agency
Middle States Association	informal
New England Association	formal
North Central Association	informal
Northwest Association	none apparent
Southern Association	formal
Western Association	none evident

Table 11
Relationship with Regional Accreditation Association as Reported by States

State	Agency	Relationship with Accreditation Agency
Alabama	SACS	not evident
Alaska	NWACS	Recent NWASC assessment requirement for self-study is cited as an influence on Educational Effectiveness Policy.
Arizona	NCACS	not evident
Arkansas	NCACS	not evident
California	NWACS	not evident
Colorado	NCACS	not evident
Connecticut	NEACS	not evident
Delaware	MSACS	not evident
D.C.	n/a	not evident
Florida	SACS	not evident
Georgia	SACS	not evident
Hawaii	WACS	not evident
Idaho	NWACS	not evident
Illinois	NCACS	State Board of Higher Education noted NCACS' 1989 request that institutions develop student assessment plan. The types of outcomes evidence suggested by NCACS closely parallel the BOE's assessment components.
Indiana	NCACS	not evident
Iowa	NCACS	not evident
Kansas	NCACS	In its most recent NCACS report, the University of Kansas system of assessment was described as "extremely sophisticated" and "not inexpensive."
Kentucky	SACS	Assessment activities are complementary to both institutional and programmatic accreditations.
Louisiana	SACS	not evident
Maine	NEACS	not evident
Maryland	MSACS	not evident
Michigan	NCACS	not evident
Minnesota	NCACS	not evident
Mississippi	SACS	The Trustees' policy links assessment with the accreditation requirements of the SACS.
Montana	NWACS	not evident
Nebraska	NCACS	The state sees the assessment requirements of NCACS as complementary to its own goals of consistency with the state Comprehensive Strategic Plan.
Nevada	NWACS	The Regents recognize that the "NWACS is now placing a greater emphasis on assessment. The [state] Commission on Colleges expects each institution and program to adopt an assessment scheme responsive to its mission and needs, and the campuses are responding."
New Hampshire	NEACS	not evident
New Jersey	MSACS	not evident
New Mexico	NCACS	Current unwritten policy is to encourage progress at the institutional level in assessment of student learning and institutional performance, supporting NCACS' accreditation requirements.

New York	MSACS	"The Department is also moving toward a closer working relationship with the [MSACS]...as a means of assuring consistency in standards as well as efficiencies in staff time and cost."
North Carolina	SACS	not evident
North Dakota	NCACS	The State BOE policy requiring institutions to assess student achievement in light of institutional mission "is interpreted to minimally be the assessment required by the NCACS."
Ohio	NCACS	A connection between assessment of student learning outcomes and the assessment of accreditation has been drawn by the BOR.
Oklahoma	NCACS	The Regents acknowledge the NCACS' expectation that "all institutions are expected to assess the achievements of their students..."
Oregon	NWACS	not evident
Pennsylvania	MSACS	not evident
Puerto Rico	MSACS	not evident
Rhode Island	NEACS	The Board of Governors' policy allows institutions to substitute accrediting reports for program reviews, and requires institutions to submit accrediting reports as part of their larger institutional quality reports.
South Carolina	SACS	Accreditation of degree-granting programs is one of the performance indicators.
South Dakota	NCACS	Policy 2:11 links the state requirement closely to the accreditation requirement for outcomes assessment of the NCACS.
Tennessee	SACS	One of the performance indicators calls for institutions "to achieve and maintain program accreditation."
Texas	SACS	not evident
Utah	NWACS	Regional and professional/disciplinary accreditation processes are "essential to maintaining quality."
Vermont	NEACS	not evident
Virginia	SACS	not evident
Washington	NWACS	not evident
West Virginia	NCACS	not evident
Wisconsin	NCACS	The Academic Quality Program (AQP), in particular, was designed "with special emphasis on meeting the NCACS accreditation guidelines for assessment."
Wyoming	NCACS	not evident

Influences visible

SACS has a written policy regarding the participation of representatives of governing, coordinating, and other state agencies on college visiting committees. The policy statement indicates that SACS will provide the relevant documents concerning the institutional self-study, the visiting committee's report, and each institution's response to their accreditation visit with their state agency. Departments of higher education in states within the New England Association of

Schools and Colleges region are notified annually of institutions being evaluated by the commission and often a staff member of the department accompanies the accreditation team as an observer.

MSACS has participated in informal discussions with the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education and with New Jersey's Excellence and Accountability Committee. NCACS maintains regular communications and discussions with officers of state governing and coordinating boards in its region. Interestingly, of the six regional associations NCACS has gone to the greatest lengths to understand the potential, and pursue opportunities for connections with state policymakers. In 1990 and 1996 NCACS surveyed the state higher education agencies of the 19 states in its region, asking states about their expectations for assessment and how much the states knew of NCACS's initiative to assess student academic achievement. The 1996 report, *State Agency Expectations for Assessment in the North Central Region: A Follow-up on the 1990 Survey*, made the following observations:

- North Central's assessment initiative has had significant impact in terms of informing and accelerating a number of state assessment efforts;
- States would like to see greater communication and collaboration between themselves and North Central to enhance institutional assessment efforts via information sharing and training opportunities;
- And, a joint cataloging of NCACS and state assessment expectations would be helpful to the association, state agencies, and institutions.

The Oklahoma and Ohio Boards of Regents acknowledge that North Central's expectations for assessment have influenced their state policies. Illinois' and South Dakota's assessment policy components closely parallel those of North Central. In Wisconsin the AQP was designed as a means of meeting the association's guidelines for assessment.

The patterns found in the North Central region can be found elsewhere. Mississippi, which is a SACS constituency, explicitly states that its trustees clearly linked their assessment policies and practices with the SACS requirements. The development of Alaska's Educational Effectiveness Policy and Nevada's assessment practices are partially attributed to Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges' self-study assessment requirements.

A pattern of interdependence and mutual influence between some state and regional accreditation associations is evident. The actual strength and nature of the influence are difficult to fully discern at this stage of the research, but the connections suggest future direction for the next stages of this project. The states need to be explicitly asked how and in what specific ways the regional accreditation association assessment policies have influenced state policies and institutional practices.

Training role new

Over the past 12 years the regional accrediting associations have adopted as a central measure of institutional effectiveness the assessment of student learning. Institutional adoption and use of outcomes assessment is best characterized as still being in the early phases of development. As Table 12 illustrates, the associations have only recently engaged in systematically guiding and training their institutional membership in assessment practices and processes.

Table 12
Association Assessment-Focused Resource Materials and Institutional Training Programs

Regional Association	Resource Materials	Institutional Training
Middle States Association	Framework (1990, 1996 editions)	Training Symposia (1996-1997)
New England Association	Background Paper/Planning and Evaluation Session and Student Outcomes Assessment Project	Initiated in 1997, Student Outcomes Assessment Project's aim is to inform development of training
North Central Association	Characteristics of an Assessment Program and Worksheet to Judge Inclusion of Assessment Data	1991 regional workshops introducing commitment to assessment
Northwest Association	Policy 25	none apparent
Southern Association	Resource Manual on Institutional Effectiveness	none apparent
Western Association	Resource Manual: Achieving Institutional Effectiveness Through Assessment	assessment included in all institutional self-study workshops

Concomitantly several of the associations have recently engaged in efforts to determine the status of their assessment efforts (see Table 13). In 1995 Middle States conducted a survey of their member institutions to determine what progress their members had made in assessment. The association found that over half of the responding institutions had no institutional assessment plan and just over one-third had a plan that was no more than three years old. Institutions requested assistance in developing their plans and Middle States has responded by designing workshops for their member institutions. In the fall of 1996 and continuing into 1997 the training seminars Middle States has been conducting have been well-attended, indicating the present need and desire for associational assistance.

Table 13
Association Evaluation of Assessment Efforts

Regional Association	Evaluation Project Name and Year
Middle States Association	Outcomes Assessment Survey/1995
New England Association	Student Outcomes Assessment Project/1997
North Central Association	Opportunities for Improvement/1996
Northwest Association	none apparent
Southern Association	none apparent
Western Association	none apparent

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges is currently following directly in Middle States footsteps with the initiation of the Student Outcomes Assessment Project. The major goal of this initiative is to assist institutions in designing systematic approaches and specific processes for assessing institutional effectiveness and designing means for quality improvement. Member institutions were to be surveyed in the spring of 1997 to determine how the association should proceed, what the institutions need assistance with, and what kind of initiative the association should design. Institutions are being asked to indicate how they understand and approach student outcomes assessment in undergraduate academic programs and how assessment results are used to inform institutional decision making and planning processes. From these responses materials and training sessions will be designed to facilitate institutional progress with regard to outcomes assessment.

North Central, as of June 1995, required all of its member institutions to submit an explicit plan for how they have been or will be approaching the assessment of student academic achievement. By March of 1996 most of the plans had been received and reviewed and a report describing the scope and direction of assessment in the region was written. Review of the plans culminated in one overarching recommendation that institutions determine more explicitly how they were contributing to student cognitive, behavioral, and/or affective development.

These three regional accreditation associations are working to determine where their member institutions are and how they can facilitate further progress in assessing outcomes through training workshops and materials, as well as definitional fine-tuning.

Of the regional accrediting associations the Western Association of Schools and Colleges is taking some of the greatest strides forward. Specifically, it is trying to reframe the goal of accreditation around building institutional capacity to improve teaching and learning, versus merely meeting standards. In a series of experimental self-studies being conducted in the spring of 1997, WASC is attempting to reconsider what the role of accreditation might be – a role that engages the critical issues in higher education. WASC seeks to involve and support institutions in building "cultures of evidence" which consciously consider what information is needed to understand what and how students are learning; how instructional practices affect that process and what can be done with the information once gathered.

WASC's work suggests that accreditation is at yet another crossroads, as the association strives to move the assessment of outcomes to a level of greater clarity and maturity in practice. At the same time, leaders in the other regional accrediting associations are pursuing critical queries and providing insightful answers as to how learning and teaching can be enhanced in our nation's colleges and universities.

Future directions

Some guidelines:
context influences
inter-state exchanges
other relationships
states' intentions
incentive choices

This report has provided a brief history of state and regional accreditation association assessment policy development, a review of prior research findings, and an analysis of the status of assessment policies and practices in each of the fifty states and six regional accrediting associations. This work lays the foundation for Year 2 of research which will focus on gaining an even more detailed understanding of the intent and role of the states and accreditation associations in shaping assessment policies and practices. Of equal importance will be the solicitation of the opinions of policymakers and higher education and regional accreditation leaders about the effectiveness of the current policies and practices.

The following questions and observations which emerged from this first year of policy analysis will guide the next year of inquiry:

- In what ways does the political context (e.g., governance structure, relationship of state council and board executives with political leaders) of each state influence the nature and content of state assessment policies and practices?
- In what ways are states influencing each other's assessment policies and practices?
- What is the degree and nature of influence between the states and regional accrediting associations with regard to their assessment policies and practices. Who is influencing whom, and how?
- What is the intent of those states using common assessment practices and instruments?
- Four approaches to using financial incentives and consequences to leverage assessment activities have been identified. What explains why states chose the policy approaches that they are currently implementing? Is there evidence of differing outcomes based on approach?

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APPENDIX A
State Assessment
Policy Analysis

BENCHMARKING ASSESSMENT

Assessment of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education for Improvement & Public Accountability:
State Governing, Coordinating Board & Regional Accreditation Association Policies and Practices

Alabama

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State Agency
Alabama Commission on Higher Education

Original Initiative and Year
Statewide Policy on Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes
1988

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

In 1988, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education developed two state-wide assessment policies. One policy concerned Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes; the other policy addressed Programmatic Accreditation. In 1990, the State Commission adopted additional policies relating to academic program review. Guidelines for this policy were set in 1991, and amended in 1995. It is not clear from the state documents what prompted Alabama to establish or amend these policies. Most recently, in 1996, the Alabama Legislature passed a resolution creating a Higher Education Funding Advisory Commission, charged "to develop a proposed new funding approach for higher education that is performance-based and uses other incentive funding approaches." This move toward performance funding stemmed from a stated desire on the part of the Legislature to support "initiatives by institutions of higher education to continue its efforts to provide quality and educational efficiencies." Also in 1996, the legislature passed Act 96-557, which incorporated the Policy on the Identification of Programs for Review (described below) into law.

Policy Type

The initial policy on Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes was designed to enable institutions "to demonstrate accountability to the state for its considerable investment in higher education." Clearly, then. this assessment policy can be characterized as addressing accountability. Under this policy, every public institution (two-and four-year) in Alabama was required to submit a "description of an outcomes assessment program and the results of such assessments" to the Commission. The other policy from 1988, dealing with Programmatic Accreditation, sought "to provide assurance that programs of study in the public institutions of higher education in Alabama meet established standards of quality." Again, this policy's own wording makes it clear that it was a quality assurance type of policy. Under this policy, each public institution was required to "seek accreditation for all programs of study

eligible for specialized accreditation."

Policy Stage

Although the policy on Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes "is still in effect , we [Alabama Commission] no longer receive annual planning statements from the institutions; thus, we do not know what is being done in the assessment area. This policy was really just the Commission's way of encouraging institutions to join the 'assessment movement.'" Because the state commission is no longer receiving feedback from the institutions, this policy may or may not be currently implemented by the institutions, and there is no mechanism for evaluation in place.

The policy on Programmatic Accreditation, however, was retained. The State Council of Chief Academic Officers was included in discussions concerning this policy. The policy, renamed the Policy on the Identification of Programs for Review, attempted "to identify and review programs in public institutions which do not meet minimum degree completion standards based on a five-year average." Alabama underwent one five-year identification and review cycle. During this cycle, "777 programs in the senior [four-year] institutions and 627 programs in the two-year were identified for review." Of the 777 programs reviewed in four-year institutions, 300 were slated either for alteration or termination. Of the 627 programs reviewed in two-year institutions, 250 were slated either for alteration or termination. This policy was codified into law with the passage of Act 96-557 in 1996. It should be noted that this policy relates to degree productivity, not accreditation (in the regional association sense of the word).

State Guidelines

Initially in July 1988 each institution was required to describe its progress on implementing assessment programs and then the results of the programs were to be reported in each planning cycle as part of the Annual Planning Statement. Plans remain voluntary and are developed by the institutions themselves. Measures of assessment are expected to "reflect the institutional goals of the institution, provide positive incentives for change, and include multiple indicators of educational outcomes. Results of the assessments should become part of the planning process and be reflected in the Institutional Annual Planning Statements submitted to the committee." (February 1988 Policy On Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes) This annual statement is no longer required.

Programs/Positions

As of April 1996 Senate Joint Resolution 32 created the Higher Education Funding Advisory Commission to develop a new funding approach for higher education. A move toward performance based/incentive funding might result in other programmatic or positional developments.

Indicators and Outcomes

Specific outcomes have not yet been identified or mandated. From 1988 Policy Statement: "The policy will promote the attainment of the Goal of Excellence by providing high quality programs of instruction, and the Goal of Responsiveness by providing programs which contribute to the intellectual, ethical, and social development of individuals.... Measures of assessment should

reflect the instructional goals of the institution, provide positive incentives for change, and include multiple indicators of educational outcomes".

Instruments
None currently evident, but the state is in the process of establishing common instruments. The CHE is working with the Institutional Advisory Committee on this matter. There are also explorations with regard to implementing statewide rising junior examinations and a statewide testing program for college seniors in their last term of study.

Teaching-Learning Elements
It appears that the extent of teaching and learning elements evidenced is limited. All that the policy states is that, "measures of assessment should reflect the instructional goals of the institution, provide positive incentives for change, and include multiple indicators of educational outcomes".

Public Reporting
Voluntary

Database
A bill passed by the state legislature in 1996 requires the CHE to establish a comprehensive multi-institutional database for students and faculty. This database is currently under development.

Budget
Per NCHEMS Report: "No new or distinct funding was attached to the assessment policy. There are no state funds for assessment purposes and each institutions funds such activities through regular appropriations."

Regional Accreditation Association
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
Policy on Programmatic Accreditation (1988) implemented to complete an inventory of instructional programs for which specialized accreditation is available. In general the policy advocates for institutions to seek accreditation for all programs of study available for specialized accreditation.

Technology Focus
not evident

Alaska

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State Agency
Board of Regents and Commission on Postsecondary Education

Original Initiative and Year
Board of Regents' Educational Effectiveness Policy 1996

Policy Analysis

Policy Context and Type

Partly in response to the action of Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, the chief academic officers of Alaska's three universities proposed, and the Board of Regents enacted, a policy on "Educational Effectiveness". Previous to this there has been no such document with systemwide or statewide impact. This policy has as its stated purpose "[T]o improve the effectiveness of its educational programs and the fulfillment of its mission and objectives..." This wording would suggest a focus on quality assurance in the Regents' assessment policy.

Policy Stage

The system has completed its first annual report on its assessment activities. It is not clear what, if any, evaluation will be done as part of the overall process.

State Guidelines

Each MAU (What does this stand for?) is expected to "regularly undertake studies of the impact of its academic programs on its students and graduates. Universities are expected to describe achievements expected of their students and adopt reliable procedures for assessing those achievements. Assessment practices will be coordinated among MAUs. An annual report on the implementation and results of assessment practices will be provided to the Board of Regents.

Programs/Positions

System academic office has provided funding for faculty to attend the AAHE Assessment Forum meetings as well as bring several speakers to Alaska.

Indicators and Outcomes

Focus is "impact of academic programs on students and graduates", but no measures, indicators or desired outcomes are described.

Instruments
none evident

Teaching-Learning Elements
The extent of mention of teaching and learning elements is mention that according to regent's policy institutions "will describe achievements expected of their students and adopt reliable procedures for assessing those achievements".

Public Reporting
Annual report

Database
Comprehensive statewide database at SHEEO level including student records from 2 and 4 year institutions.

Budget
Funding for assessment activities is included in 1996 budget request.

Regional Accreditation Association
Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
Recent NWASC assessment requirement for self-study is mentioned as influence on development of Educational Effectiveness Policy.

Disciplinary Accreditation
no relationship mentioned

Technology Focus
none evident

Issues of Note
ECS 1987 survey results indicated Alaska was considering a "rising junior" exam in reading, writing and mathematics; that through surveys the state collects information on four populations: college graduate one year and again five years after leaving the institution, students who drop out after attending a state institution full-time for one year, and students in preparatory and vocational institutions. The surveys provide information on job satisfaction, job placement and salary.

ECS 1990 report suggests evidence of interest in assessment on part of Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education in spring of 1990 to use process as means of seeking accountability and effectiveness. BOT also indicated to have incorporated a model of system assessment in its program evaluation process reviewed in 1990.
This report suggests assessment is taking place in some contexts.

Arizona

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State Agency
Arizona Board of Regents

Original Initiative and Year
Regents Mandate 1986

Policy Analysis

Policy Context and Type

Assessment in Arizona began in 1986, when the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) started issuing an "annual report on the academic performance of the preceding year's high school graduating class in mathematics and English courses at an Arizona university." (Arzberger and Cothran, 5/95) This "report card" is distributed to all school district superintendents, high school principals and counselors. This is a policy designed for accountability.

Assessment continued with the findings of a 1992 committee which conducted a Faculty Teaching Load Study and a Faculty Workload Study. In response to these findings, in 1993, the ABOR and the universities agreed on "a set of items and outcomes for which the universities would propose detailed measures and measurable goals." These goals and measures are designed to link faculty teaching effort to the quality of undergraduate education. The state's universities made their first report to the ABOR on these goals and measures in 1994. It is not clear from the state documents whether this reporting has continued, and if so, at what intervals. This policy has a strong focus on quality assurance.

In 1993, the state legislature passed the Budget Reform Act, which introduced a performance funding system for all state programs, including higher education. It is not clear from the state documents exactly how this Act has impacted higher education appropriations.

State Guidelines

The state's Budget Reform Act calls for public universities to follow a four-step process: (1) the purpose of each program must be stated in clear language; (2) goals and objectives must be identified for the next three years; (3) performance measures must be developed that measure the desired results/outcomes to be achieved; (4) outcome or quality measurements should identify the impact each program has on the goal or purpose for which it strives.

Programs and Positions
none evident

Indicators and Outcomes
Institutions were asked to develop measures and goals for the following items: (1) class availability; (2) adequacy of advising; (3) instructional technology; (4) lower-division courses taught by ranked faculty; (5) competitively educated graduates; (6) student contact with ranked faculty; and (7) research-related activities of students. The indicators used by institutions to measure these items varied.
There are two outcomes: (1) student persistence and graduation rates; and (2) length of time and credits taken for degree completion. The indicators used to measure these outcomes are common to all universities. For Outcome 1: percent of (a) full-time freshmen returning for a second year; (b full-time freshmen graduating in six years; (c) full-time lower-division transfer graduating in five years; (d) full-time upper-division transfer graduating in four years. For Outcome 2: average number of (a) years taken by all freshmen to complete a baccalaureate degree program; (b) hours earned by baccalaureate recipients who entered as freshmen; (c) hours earned by baccalaureate recipients who entered as transfers; and (d) percentage of seniors with more than 160 hours.

Instruments
Vary by institution.

Teaching-Learning Elements
none evident

Public Reporting
Annual

Database
Limited multi-institutional databases exist.

Budget
not evident

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
The ABOR recognizes the importance of technology not only for assessment but also for access. Arizona's technological initiatives include distance learning.

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State Agency
California Postsecondary Education Commission

Original Initiative and Year
Higher Education Assessment Act 1990

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

Assessment in California essentially began in 1990, when the state Legislature passed and the Governor signed Assembly Bill 1808, the Higher Education Assessment Act. The bill required the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEP) to compile an annual report profiling the progress public institutions were making toward meeting certain performance indicators. These indicators were established by CPEP and the state legislature. (Indicators are described below.)

Policy Type

Bill 1808 states clearly the intent of the legislation: "[D]emonstrable improvements in student knowledge, capacities, and skills between entrance and graduation be publicly announced and available, and that these improvements be achieved efficiently through the effective use of student and instructional resources of time, effort, and money." This intent reflects a dual focus on accountability and quality assurance.

It should be noted that the most recent annual report acknowledges that "[T]he breadth and complexity of California public higher education make the development of measures of performance that are comparable across systems very challenging."

Policy Stage

The 1996 annual report is the third report issued. The performance indicators used in the 1996 report are the same as those used in 1995. While the original statute requires CPEP to review each set of reports and make recommendations concerning the format of future reports, the results of these reviews and recommendations are not clear from the state documents.

State Guidelines
All elements of public higher education in the state--the University of California system, the California State University system, and the California Community Colleges--are required to submit an annual performance report to the Legislature, CPEP, and the state Department of Finance. CPEP is then required to review the reports and make recommendations to the Legislature and Governor about "consolidating or eliminating existing reporting requirements..."

Programs/Positions
none evident

Indicators and Outcomes
Broadly speaking, CPEP has identified five general criteria considered "pertinent to the performance of higher education in California." These are numerous, more specific indicators measured under each broad criterion. The five general criteria are (1) population context; (2) fiscal context; (3) student preparation for college; (4) student access to college; and (5) student experiences in college.

Instruments
None evident

Teaching-Learning Elements
Intent of the Assessment Act is demonstrable improvement of student knowledge, capacities, and skills and recognition that these ends are achieved via instruction.

Public Reporting
By system

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing records from four-year and two-year public institutions

Budget
"The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state." Claimed costs up to $1 million are reimbursed by a State Mandates Claims Fund

Regional Accreditation Association
Northwest Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
not evident

Issues of Note
An April 1995 report entitled "The Challenge of the Century: Planning for Record Student Enrollment and Improved Outcomes in California Postsecondary Education" addresses the future vis-a-vis four issues: (1) financing collegiate opportunity or limiting student aid; (2) creating equitable state policies for student fees and financial aid; (3) increasing educational productivity and efficiency; and (4) improving regional and statewide cooperation and collaboration.

Colorado

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State Agency
Commission on Higher Education

Original Initiative and Year
HB 1187 1985

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

Colorado's assessment activities began with the passage of House Bill 1187 in 1985. This law, called the Higher Education Accountability Program Act, required that institutions "be held accountable for demonstrable improvements in student knowledge, capacities, and skills between entrance and graduation" and that "these demonstrable improvements be publicly announced and available." (HB 1187) Responsibility for enforcing this law was given to the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE). This law also featured an appropriations component: the CCHE was authorized by HB 1187 to withhold up to two (2) percent of an institution's annual appropriation if that institution failed "to implement any part of the higher education accountability program or fails to comply with the policies and standards of the commission in regard to this program." (HB 1187)

Policy Type

In operationalizing HB 1187, the CCHE developed a policy and general procedures for the establishment of accountability programs. In this policy, the Commission clearly states: "The overall purpose of the accountability program is to ensure the public that Colorado's state-supported institutions are accountable for providing quality education efficiently through the effective use of institutional resources of time, effort, and money." (CCHE policy, 2/11/88) This wording reflects a dual focus on accountability and quality assurance.

Policy Stage

Colorado's policies changed, however, in 1996. During that year, the Legislature replaced the accountability statute with the "Higher Education Quality Assurance Act." This new act instructed the CCHE and the system's governing boards "to develop a quality indicator system to obtain information for measuring, on systemwide and institutional levels, institutional performance, student satisfaction and success, employer satisfaction, and systemwide performance." (HB 1219) Based on how well institutions meet the levels of performance set by the indicators, HB 1219 authorizes the CCHE "to consider the governing boards' and institutions'

performance on the statewide expectations and goals in making its funding recommendations and allocating funds to the governing boards." (HB 1219) Colorado is presently in the process of developing a list of performance indicators for use in operationalizing this legislation.

State Guidelines

CCHE and the governing boards will gather "the necessary information from the institutions and from students, graduates, and employers either by request or through development or implementation of surveys." CCHE is required to submit "an annual report of the information obtained through the quality indicator system." Governing boards and institutions are expected to use this information to improve the quality of education they offer.

Programs/Positions

The Colorado Commission for Achievement in Education, consisting of the CCHE, the Governor, and various members of the legislature, has been created as the group to which the Commission will report under the Higher Education Quality Assurance Act. By June, 1997, a list of performance indicators will be chosen. During the 1997 legislative session, a bill was introduced to eliminate the Colorado Commission for Achievement in Education.

Indicators and Outcomes

The recommended list of performance indicators consists of (1) percentage of graduates obtaining employment and/or engaging in further study and the pass rates of graduates on relevant professional examinations; (2) graduation, persistence, and transfer rates; (3) percentage of students who believe their instructional program met their goals; (4) existence and operation of a formal, comprehensive, and effective academic advising and career advising system; (5) employer satisfaction with the preparation of graduates; (6) general fund and tuition per FTE student in Colorado compared to other states, and instruction and academic support expenses as a percentage of educational and general expenses in each institution; (7) existence and implementation of a formal, comprehensive, and effective plan for appropriately integrating educational technology into the curriculum; (8) existence and operation of a formal, comprehensive, and effective institutional assessment and accountability plan; (9) provision of assistance to elementary and secondary education in achieving systemic reform and creation of appropriate linkages between elementary and secondary education and higher education.

Instruments

Vary by institution

Teaching-Learning Elements

The most recent funding bill for higher education allowed for the appropriation of additional funds to governing boards for specific policy objectives. Among these were objectives that addressed the level of student-faculty contact and amount of time faculty spend teaching students. However, "[T]he legislature is probably not going to fund the policy areas because last year's funding was allocated inappropriately at some governing boards (in the legislature's opinion).

Public Reporting
HB 1219 requires CCHE to "publish an annual consumer guide to state institutions of higher education for students and their families." The first such guide was published last year.

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions and some independent non-profit colleges.

Budget
The state has not determined what percentage of appropriations will be linked to performance indicators. Nor is it clear from HB 96-1088 how much additional money the General Assembly has appropriated for special policy areas.

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
One of the special policy areas for which the General Assembly may appropriate additional funds is the use of technology to lower costs and improve the quality and delivery of education. This includes distance learning initiatives and the integration of technology into the curriculum.

Connecticut

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State Agency
Board of Governors for Higher Education

Original Initiative and Year
Strategic Plan 1988

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

State-wide assessment in Connecticut began in 1988, when the Board of Governors (BOG), in their Strategic Plan for Higher Education, asked public colleges and universities to assess institutional effectiveness and report their progress to the Board. Interestingly, independent colleges and universities were invited to participate in the process. In 1993, the state legislature mandated institutional assessment, and further required that the results of assessment activities be reported biennially to the Commissioner of Higher Education and to the appropriate committees in the legislature. In 1996, the Board of Governors issued guidelines for the submission of these biennial assessment reports.

Policy Type

The 1988 BOG policy declared clearly that "the overall objective [of assessment] is to enhance the quality of instruction and student performance." This reflects a focus on quality assurance. The 1993 legislation was designed to ensure that "each public institution of higher education implements a process of institutional assessment and continuous improvement based on goals, objectives, and measurable outcomes..." This law seems to be the state's attempt to provide some legislative force behind the existing BOG policy.

State Guidelines
Each institution is required to submit an assessment report biennially. These reports are read and reviewed by the Peer Review Committee and the State Department of Higher Education. The Commissioner then forwards the reports to the Education Committee of the General Assembly. It is not clear what action is taken by the Department of Higher Education and/or the state.

Programs/Positions
A peer review committee, appointed by the Commissioner of Higher Education, assists in the review of institutional assessment plans.

Indicators and Outcomes
the 1996 guidelines recommend that each of these areas be addressed in the biennial reports: overview; general education; academic programs/major; basic skills testing, placement, and remediation; admission rates, retention rates, minority enrollment, enrollment of persons with disabilities, student financial aid, student transfer and articulation; student performance, attainment, and development; follow-up on graduates; faculty and administrative productivity; adequacy of core academic, student, and library services and facilities.

Instruments
Vary by institution.

Teaching-Learning Elements
As part of their biennial reports institutions are asked to provide goals and objectives for student performance, attainment and development; the methods they will use to assess these objectives, and information on how this assessment is used to promote improvement Intent of original policy (1989) was improvement of student performance and instruction.

Public Reporting
Biennial

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions.

Budget
not evident

Regional Accreditation Association
New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
not evident

Delaware

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No Initiatives at the state or system level.

Florida

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State Agency
Postsecondary Education Planning Commission

Original Initiative and Year
CLAST (College-level Academic Skills Test) 1982

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

In terms of testing, assessment in Florida began in 1982, when the state initiated the requirement that students take the CLAST (College-level Academic Skills Test). The CLAST was implemented "to ensure that college students graduating with an associate of arts degree or entering the upper division at a state university possess basic or essential skills deemed necessary for success...CLAST was further intended to serve as both a summative evaluation instrument prior to student enrollment in upper-division programs and as a source of information for student advisors." (1989 Report on Assessment of the General Education Curriculum) In 1983, the state initiated the use of common entry level placement tests for incoming freshmen in both two-year and four-year institutions. The assessment movement continued with a 1987 report entitled "Enhancing Undergraduate Education in the State University System of Florida," compiled by the System itself. This report contained numerous recommendations in a number of areas, including assessment. In 1988, the State Board of Community Colleges conducted program reviews of associate of arts degree programs at those institutions, attempting to assess institutions' effectiveness in meeting the general education needs of students. Assessment of the curriculum became a mandated activity in 1988, with the General Appropriations Act, in which the state legislature charged the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission (PEPC) to "undertake an assessment of the general education curriculum in Florida's public community colleges and state universities..."

In 1991, the state legislature created accountability reporting requirements for Florida's public institutions. These requirements were established, at least in part, to respond to "a perceived concern that the public did not have adequate and appropriate information about how colleges and universities function." (Accountability Review: Progress Report, 1994) More recently, the 1994 General Appropriations Act directed the PEPC to "review and evaluate the accountability plans in public postsecondary institutions as they relate to the mission and goals of each system and its respective institutions, as well as the goals articulated by the Legislature." (Ibid.) These

goals fall primarily into three areas: access/diversity; quality of undergraduate education, and productivity. Interest in linking accountability plans with state goals stems from the belief that "existing legislation and institutional responses did not sufficiently embody the kinds of characteristics that would lead to improved management at the local level and provide for systematic, ongoing assessment." (Ibid.) Interestingly, independent institutions in Florida are also covered by this policy.

Policy Type

In its 1994 report, Accountability in Florida's Postsecondary Education System, PEPC stated that assessment has two purposes: to foster improvement at the institutional level (the primary purpose), and to provide information to state-level policymakers (the secondary purpose). Thus, Florida's policy is one of both quality assurance and accountability.

Policy Stage

In 1995, PEPC conducted a review of its efforts to review institutions' accountability plans. Recommendations were made on how to improve the process. Following this evaluation, implementation of the policy has continued. In addition, the CLAST has been revisited and evaluated on numerous occasions since its implementation, resulting in an evolution of the exam since 1984.

State Guidelines

"The annual accountability report shall include goals and measurable objectives related to the system-wide strategic plan...the report must include, at a minimum, system-wide performance targets, measures, and data related to the following issues: (1) undergraduate teaching productivity and class size; (2) access and diversity; (3) baccalaureate degree retention and graduation; (4) progression to the baccalaureate degree; (5) research; (6) public service; (7) institutional quality." This wording reflects the changes recommended in the 1995 Postsecondary Accountability Review. For state universities, indicators include total student credit hours; contact hours of instruction provided by faculty; pass rates on professional licensure exams; surveys of alumni, parents, clients, and employers; time-to-degree rates; enrollment, retention, and graduation rates by race and gender; and student course demand.

Programs/Positions

none evident

Indicators and Outcomes

There are a wide variety of performance indicators, some broadly designated by the state legislature and other, more specific measures established by PEPC. There are different set of indicators for the State University System (SUS) and the Division of Community Colleges (DCC). Each of these indicators serve one or more of the following purposes: accountability; performance-based program budgeting; and incentive funding. These indicators are under discussion in the 1997 legislative session.

Instruments
--CLAST for general and major field of education
--common college placement tests
--professional licensure examinations
--surveys of alumni, parents, clients, and employers

Teaching-Learning Elements
Quality of undergraduate education is one of the three primary goals of the Florida Legislature vis-a-vis assessment.

Public Reporting
Annual

Database
Several separate institutional databases exist and are linked.

Budget
not evident

Regional Accreditation Association
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
not evident

Issues of Note
The Community College System was required to submit a performance-based budget for 1996-97; the State University System is required to do so for 1997-98. This marks the beginning of a performance funding policy in Florida.

Georgia

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State Agency
Board of Regents

Original Initiative and Year
Planning Policy 1989

Policy Analysis

Policy Context and Type

The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia (BORUSG) first adopted an assessment policy in 1989. This policy called for each institution within the University System of Georgia to develop an assessment process and to report progress toward the implementation of this process to the Chancellor's Office. According to the BORUSG policy, "[E]ach institution plan will describe the structure and process by which...the results of assessment are used to achieve institutional improvement." This would seem to indicate a policy focus on quality assurance, as well as reform.

State Guidelines

"Each institution shall have a plan...which will contain the institution's current goals and priorities, a summary of significant assessment results and associated improvement objectives, and action plans by which institutional priorities, including improvement in effectiveness, will be achieved." The policy acknowledges that "assessment procedures may differ from institution to institution," but the Regents outlined four areas on which all institutions must report assessment results: basic academic skills at entry; general education; specific degree program areas; and all academic and administrative support programs."

Programs/Positions

At the state level, the Task Force on the Assessment of General Education was established in 12/88, and the Committee on the Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness was made part of the formal Administrative Committee Structure in 12/89. At the institutional level, committees have been created on some campuses to facilitate their assessment activities.

Indicators and Outcomes

These vary by institution, but institutional types tend to have similar indicators. In Georgia, for assessment purposes, institutions are categorized as universities, regional universities, state universities, and associate-level colleges.

Instruments
Yes

Teaching-Learning Elements
Georgia places a strong emphasis on student learning outcomes in its policy, and has developed a model for the process of assessing these outcomes, calling for each program to define student learning outcomes, establish measurable expected results for each outcome and assess those results, analyze assessment results to identify strengths and weaknesses, and take the necessary steps to improve the program. (BORUSG, 1989-90)

Public Reporting
Annual

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at SHEEO level, containing student records from all four sectors of public institutions.

Budget
According to the Regents' policy, "[E]ach institution shall link its major budget allocations and other major academic administrative decisions to its planning and assessment process."

Regional Accreditation Association
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
not evident

Hawai'i

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State Agency
Board of Regents

Original Initiative and Year
Executive Policy E5.210 1989

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

In 1989, the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents approved a statement declaring the university system was "committed to a process of educational assessment that provides evidence about the institution's effectiveness in meeting its goals and objectives." To this end, the Regents directed the president of the University of Hawai'i to establish a policy guiding the assessment process for member institutions. Later that year, the University's Office of Planning and Policy issued a new executive policy on educational assessment. Additionally, beginning in 1996, Hawai'I has also employed performance indicator "benchmarks" as direction and guidance in the development of budgets and tuition schedules. Act 161 requires the university to report on their progress in meeting these benchmarks.

Policy Type

According to the executive policy, assessment was the primary means by which information could be gathered about the university system's success in meeting its goals and missions. Further, this information would be used to promote program improvement. This reflects attention to quality assurance. (The policy drew a sharp distinction between the evaluation of faculty, staff, and student performance, which was addressed in other procedures, and the assessment of program effectiveness, which was addressed by this policy.) The policy also discussed the usefulness of assessment in determining "the degree to which the University meets state objectives and satisfies state needs." This wording indicates some focus on accountability to the state level.

Policy Stage

The policy states that the Regents "will be informed of University assessment activities by means of special reports and as part of ongoing program review, accreditation, academic planning, and budgeting processes." These "special reports" have been replaced by the annual Benchmark/Performance Indicator Reports.

State Guidelines

The executive policy requires that assessment programs include the following dimensions: (1) each unit or program must have a clear mission statement; (2) special priority to undergraduate instructional programs (see teach-learn elements below); (3) recognition of the effect of graduate and professional education on overall scholarly reputation (for the UH-Manoa campus); (4) the role(s) and effectiveness of research in institutional goals; (5) data on students transferring within the system and effectiveness of student service programs; (6) evidence that shows the University is meeting the needs of the state

Programs/Positions

none evident

Indicators and Outcomes

The broad "benchmarks," or goals, articulated in the executive policy are (1) expanding access to educational opportunity; (2) striving for excellence in undergraduate education; (3) continuing to gain prominence in research and distance learning; (4) revitalizing service to the state; (5) enhancing the international role of the university; (6) maintaining diversity by clarifying campus missions and coordinating campus plans; and (7) improving the organization, financing and image of the university. The following are indicators used to measure progress toward these goals. For Goal 1: attendance rates at the University of Hawai'i for recent state high school graduates; admission rates of state residents; status of off-campus access to UH credit programs; status of remedial education; demographic trends in the composition of UH student body; status of enrollment by geographic origin within Hawai'i . For Goal 2: persistence and graduation rates; status of post-baccalaureate enrollment at UH-Manoa; success rates for transfer students; linkage with K-12; status of articulation within the UH system; percentage of eligible students who pass external exams; student satisfaction with educational experience; student satisfaction with employment preparation; student satisfaction with academic preparation; overall state of faculty satisfaction and morale; class size. For Goal 3: federal grants and contracts; library resources; access to technology. For Goal 4: number of degrees awarded annually; employer satisfaction; employment rates (for community college vocational students); economic impact of UH; opportunities for continuing education and non-credit instruction. For Goal 5: access to international programming/faculty. For Goal 6: avoidance of duplication through specialization; registration in Hawai'ian language and culture courses. For Goal 7: relationship between state appropriations and enrollment; share of state support in comparison to the rest of the state; comparison of UH tuition with peer institutions; level of investment for the physical plant; faculty salaries; faculty workload; rate of private giving; public opinion.

Instruments

Vary by institution.

Teaching-Learning Elements

Particular emphasis is given to "the interaction between undergraduate students and the campus' curricula and services." Student educational expectations, achievement in general education,

accomplishment in major field of study, level of satisfaction, and long-term tracking of satisfaction, demographics, and employment are spotlighted in the executive policy.

Public Reporting
Annual

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions.

Budget
Assessment activities are not centrally funded. Act 161, however, returns a portion of tuition revenue to the university.

Regional Accreditation Association
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
none evident

Idaho

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State Agency
State Board of Education

Original Initiative and Year
Governing Policies and Procedures - Outcomes Assessment 1988

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

Outcomes Assessment in Idaho began in 1988, when the Idaho State Board of Education (BOE) required all four of the public colleges and universities to "form campus assessment committees...compile inventory of current assessment practices...develop working knowledge of assessment as a national phenomenon..." In June, 1989, campuses reported their assessment inventories and plans to the BOE. These campus initiatives were followed by department-level assessment reports in June, 1990, and General Education Assessment in June, 1991. Since 1993, each of the four campuses has been asked to report to the BOE annually on assessment procedures, and implement changes, if necessary, to these procedures.

Policy Type

The BOE states the purpose of its Outcomes Assessment policy clearly: "The primary purpose of assessment is to enhance the quality and excellence of programs, learning, and teaching." This identifies Idaho's commitment to quality assurance. In addition, the BOE sees assessment as a means of increasing communications both within and between departments, and also as a means of giving the general public a better sense of the various roles and missions of higher education institutions. Significantly, the BOE assessment policy also states clearly how assessment should not be used: "...to compare institutions, to evaluate teachers, or to eliminate positions, programs, or departments."

Policy Stage

Idaho has broken down its assessment initiative into multiple component parts: Assessment Inventory, Assessment Plan, subject areas assessment, and general education assessment. The effectiveness of assessment procedures in subject areas and general education have been evaluated. Because of the way in which Idaho has subdivided assessment, it has gone through at least two complete policy cycles. Since then, it would seem that each year is an ongoing

evaluation of assessment procedures. Any additional policy formulation or re-formulation appears to be based on the results of this continuing evaluation process.

State Guidelines
State Board of Education identifies three guiding principles for the assessment process: student assessment of programs should be included in the current program review process; assessment of student learning should occur in major fields of study as defined at the departmental level by each institution; and student learning should be assessed in general education areas as defined by each institution. Each institution is expected to develop their own individual assessment plan using a broad range of recommended, but not mandated processes and tests. Each campus is expected to inform its student body of the assessment process and its benefits.

Programs/Positions
Each public institution formed a campus assessment committee, which included student representation.

Indicators and Outcomes
none specifically outlined

Instruments
Different kinds (surveys, standardized tests, exit examinations) are suggested but not mandated.

Teaching-Learning Elements
Assessment of student learning in both general education and major fields of study are listed as guiding principles of Outcomes Assessment Policy and Procedures. The stated primary purpose of assessment is the enhancement of teaching and learning.

Public Reporting
Annual Reports to Board

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions.

Budget
First year planning costs were borne by individual institutions, but policy notes that a long term financial commitment from the Board and Legislature will be required. The BOE allowed each institution to place planning costs into their base budget beginning in fiscal year 1990.

Regional Accreditation Association
Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
none evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
none evident

Technology Focus
none evident, but will be a future consideration

Illinois

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State Agency
State Board of Higher Education

Original Initiative and Year
Recommendations of the Committee on the Study of Undergraduate Education 1986

Policy Analysis

Assessment began in Illinois in 1986, with the recommendations of the Committee on the Study of Undergraduate Education. The State of Illinois Board of Higher Education (BHE) adopted these recommendations, and later adopted the committee's slightly revised recommendations in 1990. The 1990 recommendations call for each public institution to do the following: (1) set expectations for students' development of baccalaureate-level skills of communications, mathematics, and critical thinking, and establish objectives for general education and major field education; (2) communicate these expectations and objectives clearly to students; (3) assess individual student achievement of these expectations and objectives at appropriate intervals; (4) use assessment results to reinforce academic standards and promote student progress; and (5) report the findings and conclusions of reviews of undergraduate education to the BHE. These recommendations form the foundation of the Illinois policy. Beyond this, however, the state's "approach to assessment of students is to call upon institutions to develop appropriate assessment programs rather than develop some sort of statewide assessment text or common set of indicators." (Kelly letter, 1/28/97)

Another element of Illinois' system is the state's Priorities, Quality, and Productivity (PQP) Initiative. This initiative was designed to engage "governing boards and campus communities in priority-setting and decision-making." (PQP 1995-96 Summary) The heart of PQP is "setting priorities and making tough decisions." PQP called on public institutions of higher education to "reinvest six to eight percent of their state-appropriated operating funds from low priority programs and activities to higher priority needs." (Ibid.) This reinvestment was to take place over a three-year period from 1992 to 1995. After four years of PQP, an estimated $153.6 million has been reinvested. Of this amount, $27.5 million went to improve the quality of undergraduate education. This policy is an ongoing process of implementation, evaluation, and redesign.

State Guidelines
See Policy Analysis above.

Programs/Positions
none evident

Instruments
Vary by institution. For the assessment of baccalaureate-level skills, among the instruments used is the ACT-CAAP, and a variety of writing and math proficiency exams developed by the institutions. For the assessment of general education, at least one institution uses the ACT-COMP. Some institutions also draw data from surveys administered to students who are either withdrawing or graduating; most institutions use surveys sent to alumni.

Indicators and Outcomes
For assessment of baccalaureate-level skills, general education, and major field of education, indicators vary by institution.

Teaching-Learning Elements
Improvement of the quality of undergraduate education is one of the areas of reinvestment in the PQP policy.

Public Reporting
Made available to the public through the BOE's agenda materials, and to the Governor and the legislature as appropriate.

Database
Comprehensive statewide database at SHEEO level which contains student records from four and two-year public institutions.

Budget
Total reinvestment under PQP = $153.6 million
Reinvestment in improvement of undergraduate education = $27.5 million
Additional funding has been included each year for the last four years.

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
Board of Higher Education noted North Central's 1989 request that all member institutions develop institution-wide student assessment plan. The types of evidence suggested by North Central closely parallel the Board of Education's assessment components.

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
none evident

Indiana

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State Agency
Commission for Higher Education

Original Initiative and Year
State-level performance objectives 1984

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

Beginning with the 1985-87 biennium, public institutions in Indiana have been reporting on their progress toward meeting state-level performance objectives set by the Indiana Commission on Higher Education (ICHE). During that same biennium, budget appropriations recommendations were linked to institutional performance reports. The 1985-87 set of performance objectives have been updated in an attempt to focus on the future of public higher education in the state.

Policy Type

In the Commission's 1995 report on institutional progress toward meeting the state-level performance objectives, the rationale for this policy was stated explicitly: "One way to demonstrate the value of such investment is to call attention to higher education's accomplishments in those areas deemed important by the state...Performance objectives help to focus attention on what the state's system of postsecondary education must accomplish in the 1990s. They should also motivate discussion about alternative strategies for meeting postsecondary education's needs, which in many respects are also Indiana's needs." This wording would seem to point to a shared emphasis on accountability and reform.

Policy Stage

Since the first performance objectives were issued in 1984, ICHE has amended and revised the guidelines on multiple occasions. To the extent this has been done, Indiana has undergone numerous cycles of implementation, evaluation, and revision. This process looks to continue indefinitely.

State Guidelines
Institutions are required to submit biennial reports providing data on progress made toward meeting state-wide performance objectives.

Programs/Positions
none evident

Indicators and Outcomes
Specific indicators are divided into six major categories: (1) postsecondary participation--of all residents, of state minority residents, and of residents in underserved counties; (2) affordability--family affordability index and cost of attendance index; (3) degree completion rates--of baccalaureate, associate, and minority students; (4) medical education--students in family practice and primary care, and minority enrollment; (5) credit transfer--expanded credit transfer opportunities; and (6) productivity--as yet unspecified.

Instruments
none evident

Teaching-Learning Element
none evident

Public Reporting
biennially

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four and two-year public institutions, and some independent non-profit colleges.

Budget
not evident

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
not evident

Iowa

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State Agency
Board of Regents

Original Initiative and Year
Board of Regents Policy on Student Outcomes Assessment 1991

Policy Analysis
Beginning in 1991, Iowa's Board of Regents (BOR) required all institutions under its control to perform outcomes assessment for all of their academic programs. The BOR adopted the NASULGC Statement of Principles; in addition, each institution/program is asked to develop an assessment plan that meets its own needs. The Regents are quite clear that its assessment policy is designed, first and foremost, to improve student learning. The Deputy Executive Director acknowledges that "the collection of information documenting the institutional activities does provide institutional accountability," but the state recognizes the danger in the collection of standardized data and its use in educational policymaking. Iowa's policy, then, is focused on quality assurance.

State Guidelines
"Each institution was asked to require every academic unit to develop student outcomes reporting that will serve as a guide to them in the improvement of student learning. This meant that from a wide variety of approaches to student outcomes assessment, the units would utilize the assessment methodology of student learning that best meets the needs of the discipline and its students." (Barak letter, 8/6/96)

Programs/Positions
Varies by institution.

Indicators and Outcomes
Vary by institution and by program area.

Instruments
No

Teaching-Learning Elements
The policy is largely driven by the goal of improving student learning.

Public Reporting
Reported to the BOR annually.

Database
No multi-institutional databases exist.

Budget
not evident

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
"The institutions, particularly Iowa State University, which was recently re-accredited, and the University of Iowa, which is in the process of being re-accredited, saw that the accreditation, or institutional assessment, were compatible; i.e., served both purposes." (Barak letter)

Disciplinary Accreditation
"…in those disciplines in which assessment is required, the assessment undertaken for the BOE meets this purpose." (Barak letter)

Technology Focus
not evident

Kansas

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State Agency
Kansas Board of Regents

Original Initiative and Year
Assessment Policy 1988

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

1988 marked the beginning of state-wide assessment efforts. In that year, the Kansas Board of Regents (BOR) developed a plan focusing on the assessment of the undergraduate experience. The BOR adopted and implemented the plan in 1989.

Policy Type

According to the Regents, the "[F]undamental goal of the Board's assessment strategy is to evaluate the impact of undergraduate programs in the areas of student basic skills, general education, and the undergraduate major." This strategy has been manifested in a "variety of activities intended to improve the quality...of academic programs...and to demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of state and student resources to support them." (Emphasis is in the original.) Clearly, then, the Kansas policy focuses on quality assurance and accountability. Each of the state institutions has taken its own direction with assessment, while keeping with the Regents' overall strategic guidelines.

Policy Stage

Each institution reports annually on its assessment activities related to student basic skills and general education. Reports on students learning in the undergraduate major are submitted to the BOR every three years. As of June, 1996, all six Regents' universities have submitted plans to assess student learning in the undergraduate major. The BOR staff have these reports--on basic skills, general education, and student learning--and they have offered observations, commentary, and recommendations for the next step in the assessment process.

State Guidelines
See policy type and stage.

Programs/Positions
none evident

Indicators and Outcomes
Four common indicators: (1) retention and graduation rates; (2) student perceptions of the quality of the experience; (3) post-baccalaureate enrollment and employment survey; (4) specific to program areas

Instruments
No

Teaching-Learning Elements
The degree to which these are emphasized vary by institution, but the Regents' commitment to student learning outcomes is reflected in the general policy

Public Reporting
not evident

Database
No multi-institutional databases exist.

Budget
not evident

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
In its most recent NCA report, the University of Kansas system of assessment was described as "extremely sophisticated" and "not inexpensive."

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
not evident

Kentucky

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State Agency
Kentucky Council on Higher Education

Original Initiative and Year
Senate Bill 109 1992

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

In 1992, the Kentucky Legislature passed Senate Bill 109 into law, which required public institutions of higher education to implement an accountability process, which would provide "for a systematic ongoing evaluation of quality and effectiveness..." In 1994, for the first time, the Kentucky Commission on Higher Education (KCHE) linked its funding recommendations to reports on institutional performance. This was the precursor to a system of performance funding. Two years later, in 1996, the "Strategic Plan for Kentucky Higher Education, 1996-2000: Seize the Future," was composed, seeking to "establish system priorities for 1996-2000 and provide direction for institutional planning efforts." Among these priorities were an educated citizenry, equal opportunities, and economic development. Most recently, in July 1996, the KCHE followed up on its initial experiment with performance funding and adopted a long-term policy of performance funding. The performance measures for this policy were based in large part of the priorities set forth in the strategic plan.

Policy Type

The 1992 Accountability Legislation, as its name would suggest, was an attempt by the Kentucky General Assembly to increase the accountability of higher education. This accountability would better enable state legislators and the KCHE to "monitor performance at the institutions in each of the major areas of instruction, research, and public service, while recognizing the individual missions of each of the institutions." The strategic plan seemed to be designed to prioritize these "major areas," thus providing public colleges and universities with a more informed idea of what Kentucky as a state would need and expect from them in the coming years. In this respect, the Strategic Plan is precisely that--a plan, not a policy. The plan was followed, however, by a policy calling for the implementation of performance funding. The KCHE anticipates that a performance funding system "will help demonstrate that Kentucky higher education serves the long-term needs of the Commonwealth and that excellence in performance and outcomes is the ultimate goal of the entire higher education system." Given

this stated rationale for performance funding, the policy seems to have both accountability and quality assurance as its goals.

Policy Stage

Following the passage of the original Accountability Legislation in 1992, Kentucky has "produced four annual editions of the Higher Education Accountability Report Series (1993-1996). The series includes a system-wide report, eight university reports, fourteen community college reports, and a system-wide community college report. In 1996, the reports were redesigned based on comments from three external reviewers. The reports are now easier to read and more useful for policymakers and consumers of higher education." (Moore)

Since the 1996-1998 biennium will mark the first full-scale implementation of performance funding, this policy is currently in its initial implementation stage. It appears Kentucky will continue requiring the Accountability Reports while it moves toward a system of performance funding. It seems likely that most, if not all, of the performance measures used in the performance funding policy will be communicated in the annual Accountability Reports.

State Guidelines

The state requires the system to submit an annual accountability report, addressing performance in a variety of indicators (listed below). Three years' worth of these reports helped to inform the Strategic Plan for 1996-2000, which in turn provided the basis for the performance funding policy. All public institutions in Kentucky are measured on four common indicators, the total value of which must be at least 50 points on a 100-point scale. There are, in addition, seven institution-specific and three mission-specific indicators. Each institution selected any number from among these ten indicators on which to be measured. The value for these indicators, when totaled, could be no more than 50 points on the 100-point scale. The first institutional reports on success in meeting these indicators will be submitted in February, 1997. Based on a review of those reports, the KCHE will recommend distribution of performance-linked funds.

Positions/Programs

none evident

Indicators and Outcomes

Common indicators: 1. quality of educational outcomes; 2. student advancement; 3. use of technology in student learning; 4. preparation of K-12 teachers (common to universities); 5. educated workforce development (common to community colleges)

Institution-specific indicators: 6. effective use of resources; 7. global perspective in academic programs; 8. review of gender issues; 9. cooperative academic degree programs; 10. alternative educational delivery; 11. level of gifts, grants, and contracts funding; 12. EEO plan implementation

Mission-specific indicators: 13. institutional scholarships and grants; 14. educated workforce development; 15. educational reform--professional development

Instruments

(The instruments correspond by number to the common and institution-specific indicators below.)

1. number of degree programs and general education programs using student outcomes for program assessment
2. rate of student progress as measured by retention, graduation, or both
3. number of uses of technology in student learning by faculty
4. scores of Kentucky teachers on multiple-choice component of all Praxis II subjects area assessments, in comparison to national averages
5. qualitative report summarizing annual performance in this area
6. increase in effectiveness through the use of innovative management practices
7. degree to which global/international perspective is included in academic programs
8. qualitative report summarizing annual performance in this area
9. number of cooperative academic degree programs and/or agreements
10. number of courses or programs using alternative delivery systems (e.g., interactive TV, non-traditional time blocks, practice-based/service-learning component)
11. amount of funding received from grants, contracts, and gifts
12. degree to which EEO goals, established by KCHE, have been met

Teaching-Learning Elements

These performance indicators address student outcomes, student persistence, and teacher education/preparation.

Public Reporting

reports, available to the public, are made yearly to the governor and General Assembly

Database

Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, contains student records from 4-year and 2-year public institutions.

Budget

not clear from the state legislation or reports

Regional Accreditation Association

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship

Assessment activities are complementary to both institutional and programmatic accreditations.

Disciplinary Accreditation

Assessment activities are complementary to both institutional and programmatic accreditations

Technology Focus

One performance indicator addresses "the ultimate use of technology in the learning process..."

Louisiana

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State Agency
Board of Regents of the State of Louisiana

Original Initiative and Year
Act 237 1993

Policy Analysis
Assessment in Louisiana is strongly linked to accountability. In its 1997 report on Accountability in Louisiana's Colleges and Universities, the Board of Regents acknowledged that "Louisiana joined a growing number of other states in an effort to provide the business community, policymakers, the media, and the general public with an annual report on the state of higher education as a public investment."

Louisiana's first accountability legislation was Act 237, passed during the 1993 Regular Legislative Session. This act outlined a "number of specific indicators to guide the work of Louisiana's higher education efforts." Two years later, the Legislature passed Act 459, which required implementation of the accountability process, and also required the submission of a formal report to the Legislature in 1997. Since the passage of Act 459, committees working under the direction of the Regents have been examining the accountability indicators and the related performance measures.

According to the Regents, there are four primary purposes to the accountability effort in Louisiana: (1) to strengthen the quality of higher education; (2) to enhance the cycle of continuous improvement within and among the state's colleges and universities; (3) to inform the governor, legislators, and citizens of higher education activities; and (4) to identify further efforts to better serve Louisiana. The Regents state explicitly that assessment of institutional effectiveness and the accountability effort should not be used for broadly comparative purposes. "Because the roles, scopes, and missions of the institutions are many and varied, it is important that the data and information generated by this effort not be used to compare unlike institutions. Only peer institutions should be compared to other peer institutions." (Emphasis in the original.)

State Guidelines
Institutions report data on the indicators mandated in the accountability legislation.

Programs and Policies
none evident

Indicators and Outcomes
not clear from state documents

Instruments
licensure, certification, and professional examinations

Teaching-Learning Elements
none evident

Public Reporting
First formal report to the State Legislature was due in January, 1997.

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level.

Budget
none evident

Regional Accreditation Association
Southern Association of Schools and Colleges

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
The Regents make reference to the fact that SACS requires as a condition of accreditation that each member institution has a strategic plan and an internally developed assessment program to measure progress toward the performance goals in their institutional plan.

Disciplinary Accreditation
none evident

Technology Focus
none evident

Maine

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State Agency
University of Maine System

Original Initiative and Year
Planning Goals 1986

Policy Analysis
At present, there is no state-level legislative or executive policy regarding assessment of public institutions of higher education. All assessment is conducted at the institutional level, using measures that are institution-specific.

According to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, assessment has at least four functions: "accountability, student outcomes...to enhance the understanding of faculty members and academic administrators about what is taking place in the classroom in order to improve instruction and, ultimately, student learning." Each of the seven members of the Maine state system has taken its own direction with its assessment activities since assessment became a priority with the arrival of Robert Woodbury as Chancellor in 1986. Annual reporting by institutions on their assessment activities ended in 1994.

State Guidelines
none evident; all guidelines are set at the institutional level

Programs and Policies
none evident

Indicators and Outcomes
All indicators are determined by the institution [we have some of this information from the partial summaries of institutional reports on assessment activities].

Instruments
No

Teaching-Learning Elements
From the background statement on assessment from the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs: "[The] common purpose [of effective assessment techniques] is often to facilitate the improvement of teaching and learning by providing clear insight into what works best in various teaching and learning contexts."

Public Reporting
Periodic

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level.

Budget
Some funds were appropriated by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs in 1988, 1989, and 1990. It is not clear from the state documents how much money was appropriated, and if funds are still being appropriated.

Regional Accreditation Association
New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
varies from institution to institution

Maryland

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State Agency
Maryland Higher Education Commission

Original Initiative and Year
Reorganization of Maryland Higher Education Act 1988

Policy Analysis
The Reorganization Act of 1988 gave responsibility for assessment efforts to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). The Commission, in 1991, required each of Maryland's public colleges and universities to submit an annual report. These reports, called the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Reports, give institutions a chance to demonstrate the progress they have made toward designated performance indicators that measure student learning outcomes. The state acknowledges that these performance indicators are part of an accountability policy, and that this accountability actually has two components: educational and financial. Educational accountability can be used "to assess an institution's effectiveness in terms of student learning outcomes." Financial accountability can be used "to measure how productively and efficiently an institution uses state resources." (Florestano memo, 3/5/96)

State Guidelines
Each institution is required to submit its Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report annually. These reports must address the common performance indicators listed below. (See Indicators/Outcomes section.) Institutions may also choose to address additional, campus-specific indicators in their reports. In addition to providing data on the common and institution-specific indicators, the reports should "analyze the significance of the data to student learning outcomes" and "discuss the implications of the assessment process for innovations and changes at the campus."

Programs/Positions
none evident

Indicators and Outcomes
Common indicators of student learning: effectiveness of general education; student retention and graduation rates; student evaluations of teaching; post-baccalaureate admissions rates; academic performance of transfer students; student performance on licensing, certification, and graduate admissions exams; and post-graduate surveys. The MHEC also allows institutions to supplement

their reports with additional indicators. Examples include: basis skills tests; capstone courses; portfolios; and employers' surveys.

Instruments
No

Teaching-Learning Elements
There is an emphasis on student learning. Student evaluations of teaching is an indicator.

Public Reporting
Annual

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions.

Budget
not evident

Regional Accreditation Association
Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
none evident

Massachusetts

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State Agency
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Board of Higher Education

Original Initiative and Year
Performance Measures were mandated by the Massachusetts Legislature in General Appropriations Acts for 1994, 1995 and 1996.

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

In response to the various objectives set forth for public higher education in Massachusetts in a 1995 task force report on "Measuring Success: New Tools for Evaluating Higher Education's Performance," the state legislature mandated the Board of Higher Education (BHE) to develop a performance measurement system. More specifically, the task force report articulated four broad goals: to promote student success; promote the economic success of the commonwealth; promote civic success of the commonwealth and the local communities; and operate cost-effectively.

Policy Type

The performance measurement system has both an accountability and a quality assurance focus. The Senate Budget for FY 1997 called for accountability objectives that included affordability, accessibility, student academic achievement, responsiveness to the workplace and local communities, and cost-effective operation. For FY 1998, the House Ways and Means Committee designed performance measures around these objectives.

Policy Stage

Implementation of performance measurement system will begin in 1998. Beginning in FY 2000, the BHE will conduct an annual evaluation of the performance of each public institution.

State Guidelines

Data will be collected and analyzed on a campus, segmental, and systemwide basis. The BHE and the campuses will work jointly to establish definitions for all data elements. Based on the analysis of the data elements, an annual evaluation will be conducted to determine the success of each institutions in meeting goals and objectives. If campuses fail to meet objectives, campus trustees will be required to develop and implement an improvement plan, subject to BHE approval.

Programs/Positions
none evident

Indicators and Outcomes
"Data elements, " or indicators, are collected in four broad categories related to students, faculty, cost-effectiveness, and operating costs. In terms of students, these elements include admissions standards, remedial education, transfer, graduation and retention rates, number of students in joint programs, and funding for part-time students. For faculty, data elements include number of full-time and part-time, salaries, percent tenured, age, and teaching load. In terms of cost-effective use of resources, elements include percentages spent on administration, instruction, student services, and academic support, amount spent on deferred maintenance, funds raised from private sources, and number of courses offered on another campus. Finally for operating costs, data on expenditures per FTE student and by program area are collected.

Instruments
none evident

Teaching-Learning Elements
none evident

Public Reporting
Annual

Database

Budget
none evident

Regional Accreditation Association
New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
none evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
none evident

Technology Focus
none evident

Michigan

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No Initiatives at the state or system level.

Minnesota

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State Agency
Minnesota Higher Education Services Office

Original Initiative and Year
Task Force on Postsecondary Quality Assessment 1987

Policy Analysis
At present, the only state-level activity concerning assessment is legislation, passed and adopted in 1995, establishing five performance measures for the University of Minnesota and five additional and separate measures for the Minnesota State College and University System (MnSCU). "At this time, documentation of achievements of the performance measures in 1995-96 is being collected by the University of Minnesota and the MnSCU. Funds have not been released pending reports from the systems." (Mercer)

State Guidelines
The 1995 legislation established a performance incentive account. Each time the system fulfilled one of its system's five performance indicators, it would receive $1,000,000 from that account. Each system could receive a maximum of $5,000,000 if they succeeded in fulfilling all five of its system's performance indicators.

Programs/Positions
The 1987 Task Force on Postsecondary Quality Assessment was disbanded in 1991.

Indicators and Outcomes
The five performance indicators for the University of Minnesota are: (1) increases at the Twin Cities campus in the percent of freshmen ranking in the top 25% of their graduating high school class; (2) increase in freshmen retention rate; (3) increase in the minority freshmen retention rate and hiring rate of minority faculty; (4) increase in the five-year graduation rate; and (5) increase in the number of academic credits issued through courses offered by telecommunications.

The five performance indicators for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System are: (1) increase budget percentage directed to instruction and academic resources; (2) increase in the number of academic credits issued through courses offered by telecommunications; (3) at least a 2% increase in the freshmen retention rate; (4) increase the percentage of students in two-year

programs who graduate within two years of admission, and at least a 2% increase in the percentage of students in four-year programs who graduate within four-years; (5) increase in placement rates for occupational programs and transfer rates for community and technical colleges.

Instruments
none evident

Teaching-Learning Elements
As indicated by HESO official, indicators #1 and #2 of MSCU and University of Minnesota #5 are designed to improve teaching and learning.

Public Reporting
Not required, but the report to the legislature is a public document.

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions (also contains student records from all independent, non-profit and some proprietary schools.

Budget
The legislature placed $5,000,000 in the performance incentive accounts for both the University of Minnesota System and the Minnesota State College and University System, for a total of $10,000,000.

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
none evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
none evident

Technology Focus
All public institutions have been asked to increase the number of credits earned through courses offered by telecommunications, demonstrating a commitment to distance-learning.

Mississippi

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State Agency
Mississippi Board of Trustees of Institutions of Higher Learning

Original Initiative and Year
Board of Trustees' Policies and Bylaws 1990

Policy Analysis
According to the Board of Trustees, "[A]ll institutions under the governance of the Board shall maintain regional accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Institutions shall endeavor to acquire accreditation for all programs for which professional accreditation is available." Based on this policy, each public institution is expected to "establish and implement appropriate assessment standards and practices related to student outcomes and achievement, and/or institutional effectiveness."

State Guidelines
see policy analysis

Programs/Positions
none evident

Indicators and Outcomes
none evident

Instruments
none evident

Teaching-Learning Elements
none evident

Public Reporting
not evident

Database
Statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, but it is not comprehensive.

Budget
not evident

Regional Accreditation Association
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
The Trustees have clearly linked assessment with accreditation requirements of the SACS.

Disciplinary Accreditation
The Trustees also expect all programs "for which professional accreditation is available" to pursue and obtain that accreditation.

Technology Focus
not evident

Missouri

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State Agency
Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education

Original Initiative and Year
Value-added assessment at Northeast Missouri State University early 1980s

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

Assessment in Missouri began with the efforts of a single institution, Northeast Missouri State University (now Truman State University), which implemented a value-added assessment program in the early 1980s. The rest of the state followed soon thereafter, as "state educational leaders, with strong backing from the governor, challenged all public institutions to establish assessment programs which would improve student academic performance." (Stein letter, 2/25/97) It is important to note that the impetus for assessment did not come from the state legislature, but rather from the Missouri system of public higher education itself. However, the Missouri Business and Education Partnership Commission (MBEPC), created by an act of the state General Assembly, did recommend an emphasis on "measuring and reporting institutional performance toward mission achievement and goal realization. In addition, the commission recommended that performance mechanisms...be utilized to the maximum extent feasible." (Stein, 1996 AAHE Report)

Responding to the challenge from state educational leaders, institutions began in 1987 to submit annual reports to the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE) on their assessment activities. These assessment activities were designed by the individual institutions to serve their own missions and needs. At this same time (1986-87), Missouri established a Student Achievement Study (SAS), which was set up "to track the performance of students from high school graduation through college graduation." (Stein letter, 2/25/97)

The decentralized and autonomous nature of Missouri's system, allowing each institution to determine its own approach to assessment, eventually led some to call for a better and more consistent way to assess the state system as a whole. In reply, the state expanded its SAS data collection efforts to include data on performance indicators. reports documenting how well institutions are meeting these indicators have replaced the annual assessment reports. These

performance indicators are the foundation of a performance funding policy, called Funding for Results (FFR), which has been used in Missouri since 1991. The FFR policy works at both the state and the institutional levels, and distinguishes between two- and four-year institutions. (See indicators below.) Missouri's four-year institutions began receiving FFR funds with the FY 1994 budget, while for two-year institutions, FFR began with the FY 1995 budget. Also in 1991, the Missouri Assessment Consortium (MAC) was formed by the assessment coordinators at the public four-year institutions. The primary purpose of the MAC is to foster inter-institutional communication in a decentralized system. In recent years, assessment coordinators from public two-year institutions have also been involved in discussions about statewide policy development and implementation. In 1994, the CBHE received a grant from FIPSE to refine and expand the FFR criteria and to support new efforts to teaching and learning practices through the sponsorship of on-campus projects via a block grant mechanism.

Policy Type

According to the MAC, assessment in Missouri serves two purposes: "[F]irst, the improvement of instruction and student learning; second, accountability. Assessment should focus on student learning and instruction and should be approached as a multi-dimensional exploration of curricular and co-curricular issues and the learning process associated with them. In addition, the public institutions...recognize a variety of state-wide constituencies to which they are appropriately accountable for the effectiveness of their educational programs, including but not limited to students and parents, employers, taxpayers, the respective governing boards, the CBHE, and the state legislature." The CBHE's position is very similar: "Missouri is trying to use assessment both for improvement and accountability." (Ibid.)

Policy Stage

At present, Missouri "is at a particular junction as it addresses ways to strengthen its approach to assessment and to performance funding." (Ibid.) Because performance funding is one of the CBHE's major initiatives, and the amount of money allocated to institutions through FFR continues to grow, the state looks to be in an ongoing cycle of implementation and evaluation. The policy goals defined through a strategic planning process in 1992 serve as the standards by which new performance is evaluated and other priorities are established. A key emphasis is on setting priorities based on planning, establishing agreed-upon measures and designating a portion of the state's appropriations to public institutions based on performance.

State Guidelines

See Policy context above.

Programs/Positions

The FFR initiative has generated the initiation of a number of new groups which support the program among different constituencies:

1. The FFR Teaching and Learning Committee—faculty members from a cross-section of Missouri institutions.
2. The FFR Advisory Committee—academic officers, assessment coordinators or faculty from each public institution in Missouri
3. A Steering Committee composed of state legislators, institutional representatives, and a

coordinating board member
4. An informal group of community college personnel who focus on FFR issues in the context of the mission of community colleges

Indicators and Outcomes
Included among the indicators are percentage of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking freshmen (hereafter referred to simply as freshmen) who took the CBHE-recommended high school core curriculum; percentage of minority students who are freshmen; percentage of teacher education students who met CBHE standards on ACT, C-BASE, and NTE; percentage of freshmen who completed 24 or more credit hours by the end of the first academic year and achieved at least a 2.0 GPA; graduation, completion, and transfer rates; percentage of bachelor degree recipients who scored above the 50%-ile on nationally-normed exams in general education and major field of study; pass rates of graduates taking licensure, certification, or registration examinations.

Instruments
1. By state-wide administrative rule, C-BASE and NTE examination are used for admittance to and exit from teacher education programs.
2. ACT examinations are used as one of the general admission criteria for all four-year students.
3. Nationally-recognized and/or normed examinations are encouraged for assessment of general education as well as the major; locally developed instruments are also recognized.

Teaching-Learning Elements
The whole policy is infused with a focus on teaching and learning.

Public Reporting
Annual

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions.

Budget
For 1997 FFR, $2 million to two-year institutions (2% of core budget) and $10.6 million to four-year institutions (1.7% of core budget). Between 1994-97, $3.5 million has been added to the core budgets of two-year institutions and $27 million to the core budgets of four-year institutions through the FFR program. In FY 97, 17.1% of new funding for four-year institutions and 11.1% of new funding for two-year institutions was generated through the FFR program. Institutions have flexibility in the way they choose to utilize FFR funds except for those funds designated for campus-level teaching/learning initiatives. These resources are for a specific program of innovation, and the use of these funds is reported annually.

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
Commitment to assessment programs which support the standards promulgated by the NCA.

Disciplinary Accreditation
FFR does not specifically address this area, but a quinquennial review of each academic program is required for all public institutions. This review stresses the assessment of the outcomes of the program including the use of instruments to measure the impact of the major program for all graduates. In addition, all new programs proposals must include performance goals associated with student preparation and student outcomes.

Technology Focus
As part of the Blueprint for Missouri Higher Education, issued in 1996, a commitment has been made to improving access to higher education for all potential students, and promoting the development of an effective telecommunications-based delivery system.

Montana

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State Agency
Montana University System

Name and Year of Original Initiative
Proficiency Admission Requirements and Developmental Education in the Montana University System

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

In 1995, the Montana University System (MUS) approved a policy on "Proficiency Admission Requirements and Developmental Education in the Montana University System." This policy called for the MUS to "adopt a uniform assessment tool to be used in determining if students or prospective students have the basic proficiencies in math and English to provide them a reasonable chance of success in postsecondary education." This basic skills assessment instrument would be "made available for administration to high school juniors so that they can receive an early indication of their preparedness for postsecondary education." This would give students the opportunity to take additional, college-preparatory courses during their senior year if necessary.

In 1996, faculty and administrators from all of the MUS institutions developed Quality, Access, and Productivity Enhancement Plans for "improving quality, access, and productivity at their institutions. Each campus plan included baseline information, numerical goals for improvements and timelines through FY 1999 for reaching the agreed-upon goals." The MUS requires that institutions submit annual reports on their progress. Each institution has developed its own plan, based on its needs and mission. There are seven very broad rubrics for enhancement, which are listed in the Indicators section below.

One of the ways in which Montana encouraged faculty productivity, and thus promoted the quality of undergraduate education, was to use a new approach called "collaborative bargaining." This approach called for the state to provide 2.5% for faculty salary increases, and the remainder to come from "budget reallocation and other sources of revenue, mainly tuition." The continued use of this approach is contingent upon "success in meeting the agreed-upon goals of increased productivity, quality, and accountability" at all public institutions in the state.

Policy Type
The Proficiency Admission Requirements policy, by establishing standards for basic skills performance, is a regulatory policy. The Quality, Access, and Productivity Enhancement Plan policy combines quality assurance with accountability.

Policy stage
These policies are all in the implementation stage.

State Guidelines
See Policy Context section above.

Programs/Positions
none evident

Indicators
As part of the Quality, Access, and Productivity Enhancement Plans, seven categories of enhancement have emerged: (1) academic policies and instructional program quality; (2) faculty productivity and accountability; (3) educational technology; (4) student learning productivity; (5) academic advising; (6) access and course scheduling; and (7) fiscal policies, and library and other enhancements

Instruments
Vary by institution.

Teaching-Learning Elements
not directly evident in the seven categories of enhancement

Public Reporting
Annual

Database
No multi-institutional databases exist.

Budget
none evident

Regional Accreditation Association
Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges

Accrediting Relationship
"The postsecondary institutions in Montana are developing assessment programs in response to the standards established by the NWACS."

Disciplinary Accrediting Relationship
none evident

Technology Focus
One of the seven categories of enhancement on which institutions report is "educational technology." Enhancing faculty technology competency, establishing multi-media and interactive telecommunications classrooms, and upgrading of existing computer resources for students are some of the steps taken by different institutions.

Nebraska

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State Agency
Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

Original Initiative and Year
Program Review 1992

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

In 1992, the Nebraska Legislature passed a law requiring the State Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (CCPE) to establish "an ongoing process to review, monitor, and approve or disapprove the new and existing programs of public institutions..." This law is the only statewide policy related to assessment issues. The responsibility for this process, according to the CCPE, is "shared by three partners: the public colleges and universities, their governing boards, and the CCPE."

Policy Type

Again, as defined by the CCPE, the goals of this program review policy are "to improve the instructional programs and to assure that the state resources invested in public postsecondary education are used as efficiently as possible." If program review is successful and these goals are met, it will result in "stronger institutions and demonstrated accountability to state government and the general public." Clearly, then, the Nebraska program review policy has as its goals both accountability and quality assurance.

While the responsibility for this program review is considered to be shared among three entities, each entity is considered to have different constituencies and thus somewhat different emphases. At the institutional level, public colleges and universities in Nebraska "focus on building exemplary institutions and on direct delivery of instruction, scholarship, and service." The focus of the institutional governing boards is on "the needs and performance of the institution(s) under their responsibility and on the constituents to whom they are accountable." It is not clear from the state documents how these constituencies of the governing boards are defined. Finally, the CCPE "focuses on its constitutional and statutory responsibilities and on the needs of the people of Nebraska for strong institutions that have distinctive missions, that work together in the interests of students and taxpayers, and that avoid unnecessary duplication of programs and facilities."

Policy Stage

The first round of program reviews began in 1993. During the first three years, the CCPE reviewed a total of 657 programs distributed across all of Nebraska's public colleges, universities, and community colleges. In its report describing the program review process, the CCPE concluded that "the first three years of program review have had a significant impact on postsecondary education in Nebraska...[T]he changes that are made as a result of program review or as a result of other institutional action often result in more efficient use of institutional resources." A complete cycle is seven years. Each program will be reviewed once during the 7-year period.

State Guidelines

The state has mandated four question to guide the review of existing programs: (1) what is the centrality of the program to the role and mission of the larger institution?; (2) to what extent the program is consistent with the Comprehensive Statewide Plan (CSP)?; (3) is there evidence of need and demand for the program?; and (4) are the resources available to the program adequate? For new programs, these questions are very similar. Regarding consistency with the CSP, the state also asks for additional descriptions and information about the new program of study, how the program proposes to assess student learning, how/if the new program will seek special accreditation, how/if the new program will meet the needs of diverse students, how/if the program will collaborate with other postsecondary institutions, how/if the program will offer distance, and how/if the new program will establish partnerships with businesses, organizations, and public agencies.

Programs/Positions

none evident

Indicators and Outcomes

See Instruments

Instruments

For "centrality to role and mission," the institution is asked either to prepare a checklist or a narrative format explaining how the existing program fits with the role and mission of the institution as defined by state law. The same process is to be followed by new programs.

For "consistency with the CSP," the institution is asked to prepare narrative descriptions explaining how existing programs meet CSP priorities. These priorities will change regularly. For new programs, the institution is asked to prepare narrative descriptions explaining how the new programs will meet areas "special emphasis." (See State Guidelines above.)

For "evidence of need and demand," the institution is asked to provide the existing program's graduation figures for the five years prior to review, and the average student credit hour production of program faculty. Also for existing programs, data on job placement rates and/or studies of workforce needs are requested. For new programs, the institution is asked for this same data and what potential the new program has to contribute to these rates and needs.

Institutions must also address of unnecessary duplication for new programs.

For "adequacy of resources," the institution is asked to provide number of faculty, quantity of library holdings, and descriptions of physical facilities and equipment for existing and new programs. For new programs, the institution is asked to show a budget for the first five years.

Teaching-Learning Elements
For new programs, one of the areas of special emphasis in program review is the assessment of student learning. For existing programs, being consistent with the CSP includes providing "measurable educational results..." the goal of the program review policy is the improvement of the instructional program.

Public Reporting
The results of program review prepared for the CCPE are also available to the general public.

Database
No multi-institutional or statewide higher education databases exist.

Budget
none

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
The state sees the assessment requirements of NCA as complementary to its own goals of consistency with the CSP.

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
Requested in program review under "Adequacy of Resources" criterion.

Nevada

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State Agency
Board of Regents

Original Initiative and Year
Assessment Policy 1989

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

There have not been any statewide executive or legislative assessment initiatives in Nevada. This is in part because the UCCSN Board of Regents has constitutional status that is separate and equal to the other branches of state government.

Policy Type

In 1989, the UCCSN Board of Regents adopted a policy requiring each campus within the state system to compile and submit "an appropriate plan of regular student educational assessment." The Regents, in creating this policy, acknowledged the diversity of institutional types and missions, and so allowed each campus to tailor its assessment activities to its own mission and needs. In addition to student assessment, the Regents require each campus to submit an annual academic program review. Each year, a different set of programs are up for review. Given the multiplicity of approaches taken by campuses in relation to student assessment, and the policy of academic program review, Nevada's policy can best be characterized as a combination of quality assurance and reform.

Policy Stage

Each campus submitted preliminary student assessment plans to the Regents in 1990. This was followed by an update report in 1992. Since this update, "a great deal of progress has been made by the community colleges and universities in their student assessment efforts...as assessment is becoming an integral part of their planning activities." With both student assessment and program review, it seems evaluation and redesign is an ongoing part of the implementation process.

State Guidelines

The UCSSN Board of Regents "requires that an appropriate plan of regular student educational assessment be developed by each campus, with each campus assuming responsibility for

developing the processes and procedures to be used. Plans should be based upon campus mission and should be developed with multiple assessment approaches which may include but not be limited to testing. Among other activities, regular regional accreditation review will provide an overall assessment of the campus. Plans should reflect the mix of programs and types of students." (Regents' Policy on Student Assessment, 1/89)

Positions/Programs
New positions, if any, vary from campus to campus.

Indicators and Outcomes
Vary from campus to campus.

Instruments
Vary from campus to campus. Examples include alumni and employer surveys, standardized tests, institutional self-studies.

Teaching-Learning Elements
Vary from campus to campus.

Public Reporting
not evident

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four- and two-year public institutions.

Budget
not evident

Regional Accreditation Association
Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
The Regents recognize that the "[N]orthwest Association of Schools and Colleges is now placing a greater emphasis on assessment. The Commission on Colleges expects each institution and program to adopt an assessment scheme responsive to its mission and needs, the UCCSN campuses are responding."

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
not evident

New Hampshire

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No Initiatives at the state level. Receipt of information about the system level pending.

New Jersey

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State Agency
New Jersey Commission on Higher Education

Original Initiative and Year
BASP 1977

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

New Jersey's original assessment initiative began with the Basic Skills Assessment Program (BASP) in 1977. This program was designed to test the basic skills proficiencies of entering freshmen and to evaluate institution's efforts in remedial education. State-level assessment activity continued with the creation of the College Outcomes Evaluation Program (COEP) in 1985. A program advisory committee was appointed and given the responsibility of developing a plan of action. "Student learning and development, faculty research and scholarship, and the impact of institutions on society comprised the focus" of this plan. (COEP Advisory Committee Report, 10/23/87) In 1987, this advisory committee reported its recommendations. These recommendations called for, among other things, outcomes assessment of general education, outcomes assessment in major fields of study, assessment of the personal development and satisfaction of students, and assessment of success in providing access and meeting the human resource needs of an institution's population. This initiative gave considerable latitude to individual institutions in terms of instruments and indicators. The COEP had as its stated purpose "the improvement of undergraduate education" and attempted to balance the use of standardized measures with the need for institutional autonomy.

Policy Stage and Type

COEP ended in 1991, and the BASP was eliminated during the restructuring of higher education in New Jersey. This restructuring of the higher education system has produced a new focus on accountability. Beginning in the fall of 1995, public institutions in New Jersey began making annual reports to policymakers and the public as part of this new accountability. The Committee on Advancement, Excellence, and Accountability (CAEA) issues guidelines for the submission of annual reports by the institutions. These guidelines must be approved by the state commission. In developing these guidelines, or performance indicators, New Jersey has drawn on Ewell's definition: "Indicators can best be described as policy-relevant statistics produced regularly to support overall policy planning and monitoring at the national, state or system level." (Ewell as quoted in NJ System-wide Accountability Report, 4/96) At present, the institutional annual reports address four broad issues: faculty, affordability, access, and the return on the

public investment in higher education.

State Guidelines
Institutions submit data annually to the CAEA, reflecting progress toward meeting performance indicators in a variety of areas: affordability; retention, transfer, and graduation rates; access; and return on investment.

Programs/Positions
At the state level, the Board and Department of Higher Education have been replaced by the Commission on Higher Education and the President's Council. The CAEA was formed by the President's Council.

Indicators and Outcomes
graduation rates; SAT and other standardized test scores; percentage of students who are New Jersey residents; number of scholarship recipients

Instruments
No

Teaching-Learning Elements
Not at present

Public Reporting
Annual

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions.

Budget
no budget

Regional Accreditation Association
Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
none evident

New Mexico

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State Agency
Commission on Higher Education

Original Initiative and Year
Report Card 1990

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

In 1989, the New Mexico Commission on Higher Education (CHE) requested that its member institutions submit "comprehensive, five-year strategic plans." One section of the larger plan was to address "System Development," defined by the CHE as a description of "institutional efforts to evaluate student outcomes and other indicators of institutional effectiveness." The plans were submitted by New Mexico's 23 public universities and community colleges in 1990 and revised by those institutions in 1991. After reviewing these comprehensive plans, the CHE decided that "further statewide planning would best be served by asking that institutions focus upon specific, statewide issues...rather than continuing to submit comprehensive plans. One of the issues to be addressed is outcomes assessment."

Also in 1990, the state legislature passed a law requiring the CHE to submit an "annual report card," featuring a variety of measures. Due to a variety of problems, the "annual report card" is no longer compiled. (Some of these problems are discussed below.) Most recently, in 1993, the CHE began asking member institutions for a copy of the plan institutions sent to the North Central Association (NCA) to satisfy NCA's requirement that schools seeking accreditation have an institution-wide outcomes assessment plan. The NCA also requires a summary report on the progress each institution is making toward meeting these outcomes assessment goals. The report to the NCA, then, doubles as an assessment report to the state commission.

Policy Type

The defunct "report card" policy was designed primarily for comparative, and thus, accountability, purposes. "The indicators [of performance] are to be published annually in order to draw comparisons among schools districts and among institutions of higher learning." This comparative approach was sharply criticized by institutions, which argued that because of the "diversity of New Mexico's institutions, missions, and students," each institution should establish its own assessment measures.

The latest policy to allow institutions to submit their own unique NCA outcomes assessment plans as fulfillment of state-level assessment requests serves two purposes: (1) it does not hold numerous and varied institutions to a single, arbitrary standard; and (2) it streamlines the assessment process and "reinforces the NCA requirement rather than adds to a second requirement" from the state. Therefore, a characterization of New Mexico's assessment policy is essentially a characterization of the NCA requirement. Because most institutions feel obligated to seek NCA accreditation, the requirement for an outcomes assessment plan is at least in part regulatory. Given the understanding that accreditation generally, and the NCA requirement specifically, are means of institutional improvement, the policy requiring an outcomes assessment plan is also an effort at quality assurance.

Policy Stage

New Mexico has experienced one complete policy cycle with the "annual report card" policy. After approximately two years of implementation, that policy was evaluated as "unreliable" or "only minimally indicative of institutional performance." As a result of these criticisms, the "report card" policy was terminated. Presently, the CHE requests only that institutions submit a copy of their outcomes assessment plan prepared for NCA.

State Guidelines

The CHE collects and publishes some data on state-wide outcomes measures in its annual report on the "Condition of Higher Education in New Mexico." The Commission also encourages assessment by supporting the accreditation requirements of the NCA. Otherwise, there are no state-mandated assessment policies.

Programs/Positions

none evident

Outcomes and Indicators

In the Commission's annual report, the following outcomes measures are provided:

1. bachelor's and graduate degrees awarded, by field
2. certificates and associate's degrees awarded, by field
3. degree completion rates
4. program completion and transfer rates

Instruments

All of New Mexico's indicators are measured by unit counting. In the case of the rates of degree and program completion and transfer, unit counts are used to calculate the percentages of students who have completed degrees or programs, or have transferred.

Teaching-Learning Elements

The indicators reflect an interest in completion rates.

Public Reporting

Annual reports are available to the public.

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions.

Budget
none

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
Current unwritten policy is to encourage progress at the institutional level in assessment of student learning and institutional performance, supporting North Central's accreditation requirements. Institutional accreditation report can be used as state assessment report.

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
Expansion of educational technology, including distance education, is a major priority of the CHE, although it is not lined in any way to assessment.

New York

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State Agency
The University of the State of New York

Original Initiative and Year
Board of Regents Policy

Policy Analysis

Policy Context and Type

In New York, there are really two, concurrent assessment policies in effect. The first policy stems from the Commissioner of Higher Education's Regulations. These regulations require two things: (1) the registration of college curricula; and (2) the publication of student outcomes data. The second policy stems from the strategic plan of the Board of Regents (BOR) of the University of State of New York System. Contained within this strategic plan are six goals, as well as performance indicators by which the BOR can measure institutional and systemic progress toward achieving the six goals. of these goals, the first two--(1) "All students will meet high standards for academic performance and demonstrate the knowledge and skills required by a dynamic world" and (2) "All educational institutions will meet Regents high performance standards"--directly address student outcomes assessment. Both of these policies have quality assurance as their focus.

Policy Stage

It is not clear from the state documents when the Commissioner's Regulations, part 52 and 53, went into effect and how often registration of curricula and publication of outcomes data are required. In terms of the BOR strategic plan, it was approved in 1995. It is not clear how far along the state has gone in implementing this plan.

Recent, additional assessment activities in New York include self-study guides for the 90 public and independent colleges focusing on baccalaureate teacher education programs; statewide review of two-year and community colleges, which has student learning and development as an overarching theme; the Doctoral Evaluation Project, committed to assuring doctoral education of high quality through peer review; evaluation of programs leading to licensure; and outcomes assessment in vocational education.

At the system level, the State University of New York (SUNY) has been involved with assessment since 1989, when SUNY institutions each submitted campus assessment reports to the SUNY Central Administration. These reports addressed four dimensions of outcomes assessment: basic skills, general education, academic majors, and personal/social growth. SUNY

institutions submit updates on an annual basis about their assessment activities and results. In the City University of New York (CUNY), all institutions require students to take a comprehensive basic skills test in reading, writing, and mathematics. The State Education Department also keeps track of assessment programs at independent and proprietary institutions.

State Guidelines

On governing registration of college curricula: "To be registered, each curriculum shall show evidence of careful planning. Institutional goals and the objectives of each curriculum and of all course shall be clearly defined in writing, and a reviewing system shall be devised to estimate the success of students and faculty in achieving such goals and objectives."

On publication of student outcomes data: "Part 53 of the Commissioner's Regulations requires institutions to publish student outcomes data, namely data on student retention and, where available, placement of graduates."

Programs/Positions

"For each curriculum the institution shall designate a body of faculty who, with the academic officers of the institution, shall be responsible for setting curricular objectives, for determining the means by which achievement of objectives is measured, for evaluating the achievement of curricular objectives, and for providing academic advice to students. The faculty shall be sufficient in number to assure breadth and depth of instruction and the proper discharge of all other faculty responsibilities. The ratio of faculty to students shall be sufficient to assure effective instruction." (Commissioner's Regulations 52.2 (b) (3)).

Indicators and Outcomes

Among the performance indicators used in measuring institutional progress toward meeting the six goals in the BOR strategic plan are completion and graduation rates; rates of performance on licensure and certification exams; and the rate of employer satisfaction with the knowledge and skills of graduates.

Instruments

Vary by institution

Teaching-Learning Elements

These elements are a large part of all NY state assessment policies. Students are expected to achieve and demonstrate knowledge and skills demanded by a dynamic world.

Public Reporting

Cyclical

Database

Significant multi-institutional databases exist, but not at SHEEO level.

Budget

not evident

Regional Accreditation Association
Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
"The Department is also moving toward a closer working relationship with the regional accrediting group...as a means of assuring consistency in standards as well as efficiencies in staff time and cost." (McHugh letter, 2/13/97)

Disciplinary Accreditation
"The Department is also moving toward a closer working relationship with accrediting bodies in particular disciplines as a means of assuring consistency in standards, as well as efficiencies in staff time and cost." (Ibid.)

Technology Focus
none evident

North Carolina

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State Agency
The University of North Carolina System

Original Initiative and Year
Senate Bill 44, Chapter 752 1989

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

In 1989, the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation requiring all institutions comprising the University of North Carolina system to submit assessment reports. The institutions submitted assessment plans to the General Assembly in 1991. Contained within these plans were outlines for "comprehensive, integrated assessment to be developed and implemented over a five-year period, 1990-91 through 1994-95." Assessment reports have been submitted each year since 1992.

Policy Type

The annual reports all contain three sections. The first section consists of "activities and outcomes related to improving undergraduate student learning and development"; the second section consists of "activities and outcomes related to improving graduation rates and shortening time-to-degree"; and the third section consists of "the impact of budget flexibility on undergraduate education, including specific reallocation or redirection of resources to support and enhance undergraduate education." Sections one and two reflect a quality assurance policy; section three has a distributive focus.

Policy Stage

The first annual reports were submitted in 1992. Those reports submitted in 1994-95 were the fifth and final group of reports under the current assessment plan. Work on the new five-year Institutional Assessment Plan was concluded in late 1996. It is anticipated that this plan will "refine, recast and augment" the first five-year plan and its measures "to ensure that they address the requirements of the original 1989 legislation."

State Guidelines
See policy type above.

Programs/Positions
none evident

Indicators and Outcomes
As part of a newly-instituted Performance/Program Budgeting System (1996-97), there are four system-wide expected outcomes and indicators. (Each expected outcome is given below, followed immediately by the indicator to measure it.)
1. The University of North Carolina (UNC) will expand access for eligible NC high school graduates: percent of NC high school graduates who attend a UNC institution in the year following graduation.
2. The UNC will expand access for NC community college transfers: percent of community college cohorts who transfer to a UNC institution within two years of completing coursework at community college.
3. The UNC will expand access for non-traditional undergraduates: fall headcount enrollment of undergraduate 25 and older.
4. The UNC will continue to serve growing numbers of students seeking higher education and workforce preparation: annual undergraduate and graduate student credit hours, and number of degrees awarded at all levels.

Instruments
(1) system-wide survey of second-semester sophomores
(2) system-wide survey of graduating seniors
(3) system-wide survey of baccalaureate graduates one year after graduation

Teaching-Learning Elements
These elements are more directly addressed in the expected outcomes and measures of differing institutional types.

Public Reporting
Annual or biennial schedule for all performance indicators

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions.

Budget
$200,000 per year to support biennial surveys

Regional Accreditation Association
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
One of the expected outcomes for Comprehensive, Liberal Arts, and Baccalaureate institutions is the following: "Students will experience ready and convenient access to modern information technology resources: computers, local and wide-area networks with Internet access; and other electronic resources that support the instructional process."

Current Issues of Note
In April 1997, having studied various aspects of incentive funding for two years, the Board of Governors voted not to recommend an incentive funding plan.

North Dakota

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State Agency
North Dakota University System

Original Initiative and Year
Strategic Plan 1996

Policy Analysis
The State Board of Education requires each public institution to assess student achievement and learning in light of each institution's mission statement. There have not been any other "major initiatives" taken at the state level in terms of assessment policy or and/or student outcomes.

State Guidelines
not evident

Programs/Positions
none evident

Indicators and Outcomes
none evident

Instruments
No

Teaching-Learning Elements
none evident

Public Reporting
Cyclical

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions.

Budget
not evident

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
The State Board of Education policy requiring institutions to assess student achievement in light of institutional mission "is interpreted to minimally be the assessment process required by the regional accrediting association" (NCHEMS, 1996)

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
not evident

Ohio

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State Agency
Ohio Board of Regents

Original Initiative and Year
for performance expectations—Amended Substitute House Bill 152, 1993 Appropriations Act for FY 1994 and 1995
for funding based on performance expectations—Amended Substitute House Bill 117, 1995 Appropriations Act for FY 1995 and 1996

Policy Analysis

Policy Context, Type and Stage

In April, 1996, for the first time, the Ohio Board of Regents (BOR) included a performance funding component in the annual appropriations for public two-year community and technical colleges and university regional campuses. This performance funding policy was designed to ensure that these institutions provide "educational programs and services identified as statewide priorities and expectations." (Regents Review, Spring 1996) These priorities and expectations are discussed in the State Guidelines section below. According to Regents Chancellor Elaine Hairston, "[P]erformance funding is intended to reward campuses for providing needed services and for the quality of those services...Every campus gains a better sense of its existing strengths and areas for improvement. Students and communities gain improved access to a range of high-quality educational programs and services. The public gains greater accountability in the use of state revenues." (Ibid.) This policy, then, has both a quality assurance and an accountability focus.

In its November 1996 report, The Challenge is Change: Ohio's Master Plan for Higher Education, the Ohio BOR addressed both assessment of student learning outcomes and performance funding. As part of Objective 2, "Improve the Quality of the Learning Experiences," assessing student learning outcomes is listed as one strategy to meet that objective. The BOR acknowledges the growing national awareness of the value of assessment. The Regents also recognize that "[M]any of Ohio's campuses already are engaged in student learning outcomes assessment and many more will be in the next few years as they strive to meet new review procedures for re-accreditation." (BOR Master Plan, 1996) In speculating about the specifics of an assessment approach, the BOR states that "[W]hile no single student outcomes assessment tool is suitable for all programs, the selection of a combination of appropriate

evaluations by individual colleges and universities offers a rich opportunity to determine the quality of students' learning experiences..." (Ibid.)

As part of Objective 8, "Implement a Funding Model that Reflects Ohio's Goals for Higher Education," the creation and implementation of performance measures/benchmarks is given as a strategy to meet this objective. In discussing this strategy, the BOR summarizes its fiscal year 1996 performance funding policy for two-year colleges and university regional campuses. In FY 1997, the BOR linked funding ($3 million) to performance in the nine areas listed below (see state guidelines). Discussions are continuing on performance funding for the university campuses. Funding is linked to each of the service expectations areas, with different amounts of the total money ($3 million) awarded for each. Campuses that excel in providing service receive a larger portion of the funding. In addition, some service expectation areas reflect higher levels of importance in achieving state goals and reflect a greater percentage of the available funds.

State Guidelines
Statewide priorities and expectations for two-year institutions include developmental education services, partnerships with industry and government for work force education and training, non-credit continuing education opportunities, career/technical programming, linkages to high schools, convenience in course/program offerings and the use of alternative delivery strategies such as computer-assisted and distance learning, pre-baccalaureate education and transfer opportunities, the provision of services and programs with tuition and fees that are as low as possible, and the involvement of the community in significant campus decision-making.

Programs/Positions
none evident

Indicators and Outcomes
Each campus was asked to submit a report providing both qualitative and quantitative information, in responses to standard questions, for each area of review (i.e., career/technical programming, developmental education). An evaluation framework for each area of review provided guidance to peer review panels in assessing campus performance as "exceeding," "meeting," "partially meeting," or "failing to meet" the service expectation. Review is achieved through a reading and discussion of campus reports, and based upon consensus reached and multiple readings of each report, based upon the evaluation framework. Feedback is provided to campuses as a result of this review and "best practice" examples are identified that provide models of good service for campuses to follow, where appropriate.

Instruments
No

Teaching-Learning Elements
Assessment of student learning outcomes is clearly an emphasis of this policy.

Public Reporting
Annual

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions.

Budget
In 1996, the BOR allocated $1.5 million to two-year institutions as part of its performance funding policy. In FY 1997, the BOR allocated $3 million in this process.

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
A connection between assessment of student learning outcomes and the assessment requirements of accreditation has been drawn by the BOR.

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
One area of service evaluated focuses on non-traditional delivery of courses and specifically, the use of distance learning and other technology-based efforts.

Oklahoma

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State Agency
Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

Original Initiative and Year
Regents Policy 1991

Policy Analysis
In Oklahoma, the "responsibility for prescribing standards for admission, retention, and graduation applicable to each institution" in the state system is constitutionally-vested in the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE). The Regents, responding to national trends in assessment, as well as the North Central Association's expectation that all institutions engage in assessment of student achievement, developed an official assessment policy in 1991.

The State Regents' policy clearly states its purpose: 1) to improve instruction through the systematic gathering, interpretation, and use of information about student learning/achievement, and 2) to provide public accountability. The policy has been revised twice since its implementation – in 1994 and again in 1996.

State Guidelines
All institutions are required to assess students at four levels: (1) entry-level, to determine academic preparation and course placement; (2) mid-level, to determine general education competencies; (3) exit-level (program outcomes), to evaluate the outcomes in a student's major; and (4) student satisfaction, to determine students' perceptions of their educational experiences. Assessment of graduate student achievement is optional.

Programs/Positions
In recognition of varying institutional missions and clientele served, each campus will develop its assessment program under the leadership of the local faculty and administrators providing that the procedures met State Regents' requirements. Furthermore, each component of the assessment program should be coordinated to complement the whole.

Indicators and Outcomes
Vary by institution. Each institution is, however, required to report the following:
For entry-level assessment: number of students participating in entry-level assessment and

number of students requiring additional basic skills development, explanatory summary of assessment results, and the methods used (courses, tutoring etc.) by which students were required to participate in the improvement of basic skills.

For mid-level assessment: number of students assessed, explanatory summary of assessment results, and plans for change.

For exit-level assessment: number of students participating, explanatory summary of assessment results, and plans for instructional changes.

For student satisfaction assessment: number of students assessed, explanatory summary of assessment results, and plans for change.

Instruments

For primary entry-level assessment, the ACT is used by all institutions. Secondary entry-level tests include ASSET, CPT, COMPASS, and the Nelson-Denny Reading Test. Institutionally-developed tests are also used.

For mid-level assessment, the ACT-CAAP, BASE, CAT, and TABE are used most commonly.

For exit-level assessment, the MFAT, GRE, MCAT, GMAT, and LSAT, Area Concentration Achievement Tests (ACAT) and ACT-COMP are used. Additional measures include exit interviews, senior projects, student portfolios, certification and licensing exams, capstone courses, and job placement.

For assessment of student satisfaction, nationally-standardized surveys such as the ACT-SOS, the SSI, the ACT Alumni Survey, and the CSEQ are used. Institutionally developed instruments are also used.

Teaching-Learning Elements

Intent of policy is to improve instruction with knowledge about how well and what students are learning. See Instruments section above.

Public Reporting

Annual

Database

Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions. Also contains student records from some independent, non-profit and some proprietary schools.

Budget

Each institution is permitted to charge a fee for the purposes of conducting institutional and programmatic assessment. This fee can be no more than one dollar per credit hour.

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
The Regents acknowledge the NCA's expectation that "all institutions are expected to assess the achievements of their students..."

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
none evident

Oregon

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State Agency
Oregon State System of Higher Education (OSSHE)

Original Initiative and Year
Board Policy 1991

Policy Analysis

Policy Context and Type

Assessment in Oregon has been, and continues to be, done at the system level. There have been no initiatives related to assessment from the executive or legislative branches of government. The state university system's Academic Council adopted the Oregon Assessment Model (OAM) in 1993. This model called for assessment of student performance at "three critical transitions: admissions, midpoint, and graduation." According to a summary on assessment and accountability prepared by the Office of Academic Affairs for OSSHE, "A goal of the assessment model is quality assurance. Those who participate and invest in higher education should expect high quality." In 1994, each campus within the Oregon system was given incentive funds to help defray the costs of implementing the OAM. In 1995, an accountability report, based on institutional assessment activities, was made to the State Legislature. OSSHE acknowledges that its assessment policy is a "two-pronged approach. The emphasis at the system level is with accountability. Campuses assume responsibility for program level assessment and looking at individual student outcomes and implications for curricular revision." (Goldschmidt letter, 1/27/97)

Policy Stage

"The campuses are at various stages of implementing the Oregon Assessment Model." (Goldschmidt letter, 1/27/97)

State Guidelines

Each institution is required to submit a report biennially, providing "evidence about student performance at three critical transitions: admissions, midpoint, and graduation."

Programs/Positions

none evident; the Academic Council which adopted the OAM is a permanent policy advisory group consisting of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and provosts from all seven of the state's public colleges and universities.

Indicators and Outcomes
There are seven broad indicators of student success and achievement in the OMA: (1) general knowledge and abilities; (2) learning environment; (3) major field knowledge; (4) degree completion; (5) professional licensure in selected programs; (6) employment; and (7) customer satisfaction.

Instruments
Policy seeks measure of student performance. The means to this end varies by institution.

Teaching-Learning Elements
Vary by institution.

Public Reporting
Biennial

Database
Statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, but it is not comprehensive> Contains four-year institutional data only..

Budget
OSSHE has used small amounts of incentive funds ($200,000 a biennium) to incent campuses to participate in collaborative assessment projects and for implementation of OAM.

Regional Accreditation Association
Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
not evident

Current Issues of Note
"There is a growing interest on the part of the Board of Higher Education in performance indicators, largely in the areas of employment and national examinations (such as professional licensure). " (Goldschmidt letter, 1/27/97)

Pennsylvania

No Initiatives at the state or system level.

Rhode Island

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State Agency
Rhode Island Office of Higher Education

Original Initiative and Year
Board of Governors' Policy on Quality in Higher Education, Program and Institutional Review Processes 1986

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

In 1986, the Rhode Island Board of Governors (BoG) adopted guidelines for both program reviews and institutional quality reviews. While additional guidelines were added in 1988, and the whole process was streamlined in 1990, the current policy remains very similar to the original.

Policy Type

The first half of the BoG policy calls for program review. Institutions may, if they choose, submit national accreditation assessment reports in lieu of BoG program review reports. It is not clear from the state documents what action is taken, if any, in response to the findings of the review reports.

The second half of the BoG policy calls for institutional quality reviews. Institutions are required to submit the findings of each ten-year regional accreditation report and any other special reports or reviews as part of these institutional quality reviews. In addition, each of the state's three public institutions must submit the following information about each of the state's quality indicators (see below for list): (1) summary data on the indicator; (2) significant changes in this indicator since the previous report; (3) any changes related to this indicator under consideration; (4) any major impediments related to change related to this indicator; and (5) a description of the review process. The state uses this information as part of the on-going monitoring process of programs.

Policy Stage

The reports were intended to run on a seven-year cycle. However, the state has not kept to this cycle. Instead the state looks at programs on an as-needed basis. Currently small enrollments have resulted in review, particularly at the institutional level

State Guidelines
See Policy type above.

Programs/Positions
none evident

Indicators and Outcomes
The following are recommended quality indicators for the Institutional Quality Reviews: (1) background information on students--pre-matriculation measures such as placement tests and admissions measures such as yearly admissions profiles; (2) resources--support for libraries, financial aid analysis, and financial incentive programs to promote quality; (3) faculty--number of part-time faculty, support for professional development, research and other scholarly and creative activities, and efforts to promote faculty service; (4) special programs--descriptions of remedial programs, general education, academic advising; (5) outcomes--retention and graduation rates, outcomes assessment, follow-up on both graduates and non-graduated former students, student and alumni satisfaction; (6) other changes --related to the improvement of academic policy.

Instruments
Not thought to be appropriate for three institutions all with a unique identity: a community college, liberal arts college, and a research university.

Teaching-Learning Elements
One of the recommended quality indicators relates to how institutions are conducting outcome assessments and evaluations, but degree and nature of attention to teaching and learning is not clear. Special attention is paid to teacher education programs in this indicator.

Public Reporting
Voluntary

Database
No multi-institutional databases exist.

Budget
not evident

Regional Accreditation Association
New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
The BoG policy allows institutions to substitute accrediting reports for program reviews, and requires institutions to submit accrediting reports as part of their larger institutional quality reports.

Disciplinary Accreditation
Done on a program by program basis.

Technology Focus
Recently added element for all programs to describe the uses made of technology

South Carolina

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State Agency
South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

Original Initiative and Year
Cutting Edge 1988

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

Assessment in South Carolina is a "play in three acts." The first Act, passed by the state legislature in 1988, is Act 629, which declared that "each institution of higher learning is responsible for maintaining a system to measure institutional effectiveness in accord with provisions, procedures, and requirements developed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHE)." (Section 59-104-650 (b) (1) of Act 629). The second Act, approved by the legislature in 1992, is Act 255, which required institutions to "submit an annual report to the Governor and to the General Assembly...presented in a readable format so as to easily compare with peer institutions in South Carolina and other Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states the state's public postsecondary institutions." (Section 59-101-350 (A) of Act 255). The third and most recent assessment policy, Act 359, was adopted by the legislature in 1996. Act 359 "requires that state appropriations for public higher education be based on institutions' success in meeting thirty-seven performance indicators..." ("Dynamics," Summer 1996). These performance indicators are included in the legislation. Act 359 further mandates that this policy be implemented fully by 1999. It is important to note that Act 359 is in addition to, not in place of, Acts 629 and 255.

Policy Type

Act 629 was intended to "strengthen the quality of higher education and to produce a continuous cycle of improvement in public colleges and universities." (Guidelines for Institutional Effectiveness, 1989 and 1995.) This act requires institutions to provide information on 18 indicators, reduced to 17 indicators in updated guidelines issued in 1995. This policy has a focus on quality assurance. Act 255 required institutions to provide data on a set of indicators established by the legislature; in this case, 11 indicators for four-year institutions and seven (7) indicators for two-year institutions. The purpose of this reporting, however, differed from Act 629 in that data gathered in compliance with Act 255 was used for comparative purposes with institutions both in South Carolina and with institutions in the member states of the SREB. This

comparative dimension makes this policy one of accountability. Act 359, calling as it does for a 100% performance funding system by July, 1999, is a distributive policy.

Policy Stage

Acts 629 and 255 remain in effect, and institutions submit reports in compliance with these laws annually. Act 629 was updated in 1995. Act 359 mandated a total of 37 performance indicators. These indicators will be used, in combination with the current enrollment-driven formula, to determine a portion of new money for the 1997-98 appropriations. The state plans to move to a 100% performance-funding appropriations formula for fiscal year 1999-2000.

State Guidelines

See Policy context section above.

Programs and Positions

At state level, Coordinator of Planning and Assessment position was added in 1988. In July 1996, a director position was added to oversee the performance funding initiative.

Indicators and Outcomes

For Act 359, the indicators are expenditure of funds to achieve institutional mission; curricula offered to achieve mission; approval of a mission statement; adoption of a strategic plan to support the mission statement; attainment of goals of the strategic plan; academic and other credentials of faculty; performance review system for faculty to include student and peer evaluations; post-tenure review for tenured faculty; compensation of faculty; availability of faculty to students outside classroom; community and public service activities of faculty for which no extra compensation is paid; class sizes and student/teacher ratios; number of credit hours taught by faculty; ratio of full-time faculty to other full-time employees; accreditation of degree-granting programs; institutional emphasis on quality teacher education and reform; sharing and use of technology, programs, equipment, supplies and source matter experts within the institution, with other institutions, and with the business community; cooperation with private industry; percentage of administrative costs compared to academic costs; use of best management practices; elimination of unjustified duplication; amount of general overhead costs; SAT and ACT scores of students; high school class standing, GPAs, and activities of students; postsecondary non-academic achievements of students; priority on enrolling in-state residents; graduation rates; employment rates; employer feedback on graduates; scores of graduates on employment-related exams; number of graduates who continue their education; credit hours earned by graduates; transferability of credits to and from institutions; continuing education; accessibility for all citizens of the state; financial support for reform in teaching education; amount of public and private sector grants.

Instruments

--professional licensure and certification examinations (such as NTE and NMBE)
--statewide surveys using a common set of survey questions
--some vary by institution

Teaching-Learning Elements
Act 629 contains substantial consideration of these elements. Two of the categories of performance indicators in Act 359 address issues of instructional quality and graduates' achievements.

Public Reporting
Annual

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions.

Budget
It is not clear from state documents what percentage of the appropriations formula is determined by performance indicators for 1997 and 1998. The formula will be 100% indicator-driven by 1999.

Regional Accreditation Association
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
Act 629 and SACS criteria reinforce one another.

Disciplinary Accreditation
Accreditation of degree-granting programs is one of the performance indicators.

Technology Focus
One performance indicator (Act 359) is the sharing and use of technology, programs, equipment, and expertise within institution, with other institutions, and with business community.

South Dakota

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State Agency
South Dakota Board of Regents

Original Initiative and Year
Assessment Policy 1984

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

Assessment in South Dakota began in 1984, when the Board of Regents (BOR) implemented a statewide program designed "to provide institutions, departments, and students with information necessary to adequately identify strengths and weaknesses in the general education curriculum as well as specific academic programs." (Assessment Committee report, 6/87) The primary source of this information came in the form of students' performance on standardized tests. In this same report, the Committee articulated some of the difficulties with the 1984 policy. These difficulties included: "high test costs; inadequate test score data; inappropriate tests; lack of student motivation; lack of faculty support." For these and other, similar reasons, the BOR decided to redesign the assessment policy. The new policy, adopted in 1987, encouraged individual institutions to use a three-tiered approach to assessment: assessment of content knowledge, assessment of the ability to process knowledge, and the assessment of student attitudes and beliefs. In essence, each campus was permitted to create its own assessment program to meet this approach. The most recent BOR policy, adopted in 1992, gave campuses even more autonomy in terms of assessment practices. A 1996 planning document, Access to Quality, calls for assessment to receive a higher priority.

Policy Type

The 1992 BOR policy (2:11) has its primary purpose "to enhance the quality and excellence of programs, learning, and teaching by providing important information on the effectiveness of academic programs. Campus assessment programs should also increase communication within and between departments related to departmental and institutional goals and objectives. It is also important that campus assessment programs enhance the public understanding of higher education and the diversity of institutional roles and missions." Thus, South Dakota's policy has quality assurance, as well as accountability, components.

Policy Stage
Institutions are to report, at five-year intervals, to the BOR on their assessment programs beginning no later than 1995. As of 2/97, four of the six state institutions have submitted their assessment reports. Ongoing assessment activities are alluded to in the 1996 planning document.

State Guidelines
"Each university shall have in place a functioning assessment program which conforms to the accreditation requirements of the North Central Association and any specialty accreditations held by the university. At a minimum, each assessment program shall: (a) assess the general education component of the baccalaureate curriculum; (b) assess each of the specialty areas for which a baccalaureate degree is offered; and (c) consider the findings of the assessment program in the regular review of curriculum and related policies and procedures." (BOR policy 2:11)

Programs/Positions
A core curriculum committee was established on each campus to define institutional goals, how institutional progress toward these goals can be measured, and make the necessary changes in curriculum based on those measures.

Indicators and Outcomes
vary by institution

Instruments
--For process knowledge: ACT-COMP, Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal, ETS Academic Profile
--For students' attitudes and beliefs: locally-developed surveys, ACT survey series, NCHEMS series, CIRP, CSEQ

Teaching-Learning Elements
Purpose of the policy is the enhancement of learning, teaching, and programs. This can be achieved by providing information on the effectiveness of academic programs. The means to this vary by institution.

Public Reporting
Annual

Database
Statewide database at the SHEEO level but is not comprehensive.

Budget
"Each campus is authorized to include in its university support fee, a fee ($.25/credit hour) to be used for the administration of the assessment program." (BOR policy 2:11; 6/92)

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship

Policy 2:11 links the state requirement closely to the accreditation requirements for outcomes assessment of the NCA. And the policy explicitly states, "Each university shall have in place a functioning assessment program which conforms to the accreditation requirements of the North Central Association and any specialty accreditations held by the university.

Disciplinary Accreditation

"Each university shall have in place a functioning assessment program which conforms to the accreditation requirements of the North Central Association and any specialty accreditations held by the university

Technology Focus

varies by institution

Tennessee

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State Agency
Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC)

Original Initiative and Year
Performance Funding 1979

Policy Analysis

Policy Context and Stage

Tennessee has one of the longest histories of assessment activity; the state adopted its first Performance Funding Program in 1979. According to Peter Ewell, this program "remains one of the most distinctive and most often cited approaches to state-based assessment." (Ewell, 1990.) The Performance Funding Program (PFP) was appealing because "it supported necessary appropriations and because it linked new dollars with a tangible return on investment." (Ibid.) In 1982, the program was further defined: a total of 2% of available funds would be "set-aside" and awarded to institutions as a reward for fulfilling the state's five performance indicators. In recent years, the amount of "set-aside" funds has totaled between $25 and 30 million. Institutions may earn up to 5.45% of their operating budget each year.

In 1984, the state assembly passed the Comprehensive Education Reform Act (CERA), which announced a new set of "Legislative Benchmarks." This law required the THEC to submit an annual report on all of these "benchmarks" for a five-year period. Among these "benchmarks" were students' scores on standardized tests, graduation and job placement rates, and results from licensing and certification examinations. As this five-year policy drew to a close in 1989, the state assembly issued the Tennessee Challenge 2000, which included some of the elements of the CERA. The Tennessee Challenge 2000 policy requires annual reports from all institutions on their progress toward meeting the established standards. This policy is currently in effect and has been amended frequently since its inception. The new set of standards (listed below) are in effect from 1992-93 to 1996-97. Thus, the policy is an ongoing cycle of implementation and evaluation.

Policy Type

As one of the national models of state-level assessment policies, the Tennessee Performance

Funding system has a focus on quality assurance and reform, insofar as the reform will produce quality assurance. Each of performance funding standards begins with a statement of purpose. Many of these statements explain that the standards are "designed to provide incentives to an institution for improvement in the quality of its undergraduate general education programs/master's degree programs..."

State Guidelines

1. Each of the ten (10) standards established by the state (see below for list) shall apply to "all public universities, community colleges, and technical institutes in Tennessee."
2. "Each institution shall annually conduct the assessment activities required by the standards and report the results to its governing board and, through it, to the THEC."
3. "Reports are due to the governing boards by July 1 of each year and to the Commission by August 1."
4. "Data and other information will be submitted in formats provided by the Commission."
5. "Mid-year reports and requests are due to governing boards by December 1 of each year and to the Commission by January 1. Requests and petitions after that date may be considered, but only by exception."
6. "The Executive Director of the Commission may authorize modification of these standards...Final responsibility for implementation of these standards reside with THEC." (General Provisions for Performance Funding Standards)

Programs/Positions

not evident from the state documents

Indicators and Outcomes

1. performance of graduates on an approved standardized test of general education
2. performance of graduates on approved examinations in major fields of study
3. satisfaction of alumni and enrolled students
4. program accreditation
5. quality of non-accreditable undergraduate programs by external review
6. quality of master's degree programs by external review
7. level of minority enrollment and enrollment vis-a-vis mission-related goals
8. graduation and retention rates
9. institutional success in the strategic planning process
10. improvement actions (correction of weaknesses identified through the PFP)

Instruments

--For general education: ACT-COMP or College BASE
--For major field education: tests and measures to be approved in cooperation through governing boards and institutions
--Student and alumni surveys
--programmatic accreditation
--external reviews of non-accreditable undergraduate programs and graduate programs

Teaching-Learning Elements
Four of the PFP standards address teaching-learning elements: general education, major field education, non-accreditable undergraduate program education, and master's degree program education.

Public Reporting
Annual

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions.

Budget
$25 to $30 million each year is awarded through the PFP.

Regional Accreditation Association
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
Standard Four in the PFP calls for institutions "to achieve and maintain program accreditation."

Disciplinary Accreditation
see above

Technology Focus
none evident

Texas

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State Agency
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Original Initiative and Year
TASP- 1989

Policy Analysis
Texas state policy features testing, as well as an institutional effectiveness, components. In terms of testing, in 1985, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) named a Committee on Testing. This committee was charged with finding out "how many Texas students were entering college inadequately prepared for college-level work." The Committee's 1986 report, entitled A Generation of Failure: The Case for Testing and Remediation in Texas Higher Education, found that "an estimated 30% of the students entering Texas public higher education each year could not read, write, or compute at levels needed to perform effectively in higher education..." Based on this finding, the Committee made four primary recommendations: (1) Texas adopt a diagnostic test for the reading, writing, and mathematics skills needed to perform effectively in college [this test is called the Texas Academic Skills Program , TASP, test]; (2) the test be administered after admission decisions had been made, thereby avoiding a possible move to admit students according to their performance on the skills test; (3) all institutions develop student advising programs and also remedial programs to meet the needs of under-prepared students; and (4) all institutions report annually to the Texas HECB on the effectiveness of remedial and advising programs." These recommendations became law during the 1987 Texas Legislative Session. Program changes in 1993 allowed students who had scored at a certain level on the SAT, ACT, or TAAS (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills) to be exempted from the TASP. Another change required students to take the TASP test by their 9th college hour, instead of their 15th college hour.

In terms of institutional effectiveness, the HECB appointed a Task Force on Institutional Effectiveness for community and technical colleges in 1993. Based on the recommendations of this task force, the HECB developed a review system that: "identifies institutional and programmatic strengths and areas of concern; verifies institutional outcomes and improvement efforts; identifies exemplary programs and innovative ideas; and reviews progress toward goals established by colleges in Annual Data Profiles, Carl D. Perkins annual and discretionary grant applications, and Office of Civil Rights compliance."

Policy Type
The TASP testing policy is designed to ensure that "if skills deficiencies are identified, the student is required to participate in continuous remediation until he or she masters all sections of the examination." As such, this is a regulatory policy. The Institutional Effectiveness policy has a three-fold purpose: "continuous improvement of community and technical colleges in response to state and federal goals and mandates, including workforce education and training; accountability to the Texas Legislature, Governor, and U.S. Department of Education for public expenditures; demonstration of the quality and responsiveness of community and technical colleges in developing a well-educated citizenry and a highly trained workforce." This policy is clearly one of quality assurance and accountability.

Policy stage
The TASP testing policy has undergone evaluation and redesign. It is not clear from the state documents whether the Institutional Effectiveness policy for community and technical colleges has been implemented.

State Guidelines
For TASP, see Policy Analysis above. In addition to the TASP test, institutions may continue to administer "local" diagnostic examinations already in place to entering freshmen.

For Institutional Effectiveness Policy, institutions go through three steps: (1) Annual Data Profile, which "summarizes current performance data and annual progress toward meeting state-level goals and federal reporting requirements"; (2) On-site Review, which is a three-day site visit by a team of community and technical college personnel and HECB staff during which the college is evaluated on mission, effective use of resources, access, achievement, and quality; (3) Follow-up Reviews after three, six and twelve months, during which HECB staff follow-up on the implementation of recommendations made by on-site reviewers.

Programs/Policies
None evident

Indicators and Outcomes
As part of the Institutional Effectiveness policy, standards have been established to measure institutions' success. Most of these standards are general and broad in scope. Those standards relating specifically to student outcomes are course completion; technical program completion; placement of students who complete the technical program; follow-up of technical student non-returners; and licensure pass rate.

Instruments
The TASP test; others vary by institution

Teaching Learning Elements
One of the areas in which community and technical colleges are evaluated is achievement. Within this area, student outcomes is listed as one "success factor." Indicators of student outcomes is listed above.

Public Reporting
Annual for the TASP results

Budget
not evident

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions.

Regional Accreditation Association
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
One of the measures of success in for "Quality of Programs" in the Institutional Effectiveness policy is "Integrating Academic and Technical Education."

Utah

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State Agency
State Board of Regents

Original Initiative and Year
H.B. 37/Assessment Policy 1992

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

Following a national trend that "[L]egislatures around the country are asking that public institutions of higher education be accountable in much the same way other state agencies are accountable," the Utah Legislature passed House Bill 37 in 1992. This law required that the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) "report biennially its own effectiveness in the areas of student assessment, faculty productivity, and program and facility measures." This report is called the "Assessment and Accountability Report." This law also mandated the creation of an Assessment and Accountability Committee, charged with the initial review of the report.

Policy Type

The mission of USHE is "to educate the students who attend its campuses and prepare them to become productive members of their communities." Given this mission, the Assessment and Accountability Report offers a review on "how well the institutions are fulfilling their mission." All nine of the colleges and universities that comprise USHE are required to submit data for this report. Since the Assessment and Accountability Reports are used primarily to track institution's success in fulfilling its mission, Utah's assessment policy can best be described as a combination of accountability and quality assurance. Broadly speaking, "[T]he findings from the 1995 Assessment and Accountability Report will aid USHE institutions in improving the efficiency of their data collection and effectiveness in delivering programs."

Utah's assessment policy hinges on the biennial Assessment and Accountability Report. The report is reviewed first by the Assessment and Accountability Committee. The 18 members are drawn from all nine member institutions and the Utah business community. After its review, this committee recommends whether or not "additional data elements and outcome measures should be collected in order to strengthen future reports." In this respect, the committee seems to have as its primary aim the refinement of the assessment instruments, not the analysis and interpretation of the data provided by those instruments. For this reason, Utah's assessment policy deals more with accountability and quality assurance than regulation and reform.

Following the Committee's review, the Assessment and Accountability Report is then made more widely available (State Board of Regents, member institutions, legislators, general public).

Policy Stage

In response to the 1992 legislation, the first Assessment and Accountability Report was issued in 1993, the second in 1995, and the third is due this year (1997). The Assessment and Accountability Committee had the opportunity to review the 1995 report and make numerous recommendations concerning improvement of the 1997 report. Thus, Utah has completed two cycles of policy implementation (1993 and 1995) and one cycle of evaluation (1995). The results of this evaluation presumably will be reflected in the 1997 report.

The primary intention of Utah's assessment legislation is to require USHE to track and report on the effectiveness and success of its member institutions. After two cycles of policy implementation and one cycle of evaluation, it seems that the primary functional result of this assessment policy has been the ongoing improvement of the assessment instruments and procedures. As another way to improve upon the assessments and procedures, a subcommittee of the Assessment and Accountability Committee has been created to review "the efforts of other states in this arena and to review relevant literature in an effort to determine other measures and means that could prove useful in evaluating higher education." Each of the nine member institutions of the USHE is required to submit the stipulated data for the biennial report. These institutions also provide the majority of the members of the Assessment and Accountability Committee.

State Guidelines

H.B. 37 mandated biennial Assessment and Accountability reports on student assessment, faculty productivity, and program and facility measures which are reviewed by the Assessment and Accountability Committee. The reports are produced at the state level. "The updated draft [of the report] includes specific tables which the institutions will use in order to provide standardized data to the Regents and the legislators. Some data will come from anecdotal information provided by each institution." (Safman)

Programs/Positions

Utah State Higher Education Assessment and Accountability Committee formed to review biennial reports. Participants on the Committee include faculty, academic and student affairs administrators, and institutional researchers representing all nine institutions, as well are two business persons from the state.

Indicators and Outcomes

"Student assessment includes institutional preassessment measures that identify students' academic strengths and deficiencies, student progress measures which tell how institutions follow each student's progress in meeting individual goals, and student outcomes which measure graduation rates, student satisfaction with their education, and the fit between student education and employment" (1995 A&A Report, p.2).

Teaching time, research/publication productivity, professional development, and institutional and

public service are measured for faculty. Faculty and course evaluations and program review systems are in place at all nine institutions.

Instruments
Student Preassessment Measures:
-all nine institutions require ACT/SAT for admission
-Community colleges use ASSET, COMPASS and subject placement writing and mathematics exams
-all students at the 9 institutions take assessment tests to determine academic strengths and weaknesses focusing on mathematics, and reading and writing skills
Student Progress Measures
-Grade point averages, terms to completion
Student Outcomes Measures
-licensure Examinations, Graduation rates of cohorts, Capstone courses mentioned, Student Opinion Surveys and Exit Interviews (all institutions), Placement information for both employment and graduate/professional school, Alumni satisfaction surveys.

Faculty:
Faculty and course evaluations and program review processes are used. "Faculty hours continue to be of interest. Rank of faculty associated with level of classes will also be provided." (Safman)

Teaching-Learning Elements
It appears as though emphasis is more on measuring progress as indicated by retention, graduation rates, and employment information than on teaching and learning.

Public Reporting
Biennial

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions. 1995 A&A Report has in its list of recommendations "the need for uniformity and consistency in the collection of data from the institutions" and the more systematic use of data resources collected by the Commissioner's office. "The (Assessment and Accountability) Committee will also make recommendations on designing relevant data-gathering instruments with the goal of maximizing consistency in reported results" (p. 25 1995 A&A Report)

Budget
None

Regional Accreditation Association
Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship

Sees regional and professional/disciplinary accreditation process "as essential to maintaining quality" (1995, A&A Report, p. 22)

Disciplinary Accreditation

Acknowledges importance of national and professional accreditation boards evaluating programs to assure that quality measures are being met.

Technology Focus

In 1994 $7.85 million one-time funding for the Technology Initiative was appropriated by the Utah legislature. Funding was targeted toward faculty development and assistance, classroom enhancement, course/curriculum development, library resource expansion, and equipment and infrastructure. Base funding for technology initiatives was added in 1995-1996.

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No Initiatives at the state or system level.

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State Agency
State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV)

Original Initiative and Year
Assessment Program 1986

Policy Analysis

Policy Context and Stage

In 1985, the State Senate directed the SCHEV to "investigate means by which student achievement may be measured to assure the citizens of Virginia the continuing high quality of higher education in the Commonwealth." In 1987, the SCHEV issued the results of its study, which articulated guidelines for student assessment in Virginia. In that same year, the state government appropriated funds for assessment activities for the 1988-1990 biennium. Each institution in the system developed its own assessment plan, and these plans were reviewed externally, approved for implementation, and summarized in the Virginia Plan. The first progress reports on assessment plans at the institutional level were submitted in 1988. In 1989, state law made assessment a permanent responsibility of the SCHEV, and assessment funding was made part of the institution's base budgets. 1990 marked the first year of implementation for the assessment plans summarized in the Virginia Plan. Progress reports have been made biennially since then; 1996 begins the eighth year of assessment in the state. The state's policy is in a continual cycle of implementation and evaluation, as evidenced by the updating and revision of reporting guidelines after each biennium.

Policy Type

In Guideline #10, it states that "the purpose of assessment is not to compare institutions but to improve student learning and performance." This is a quality assurance policy. It was hoped that the state's approach to assessment "could meet the dual goals of program improvement and accountability. Of the two, however, improvement took priority, which influenced a number of decisions about the shape of the program." (Miller, 1995)

State Guidelines

1. Assessment of undergraduate student outcomes should be appropriate to the mission and goals of each institution and program. 2. Data collected for other reasons may be suitable for assessment purposes. 3. The effect of assessment procedures on students should be taken into

account. 4. Students should be assessed at appropriate intervals during college, and data should be collected on alumni. 5. Each institution should identify minimal verbal and quantitative skills. 6. Each institution should describe its plans and means for measuring success of remediation programs. 7. Institutions should provide annual reports on all full-time, first-year students with diplomas from Virginia for distribution to school districts. 8. Similar reports should be compiled on community-college transfer students. 9. Each institution has the responsibility to evaluate its own assessment procedures. 10. The purpose of assessment is not to compare institutions but to improve student learning and performance.

Guidelines on the specific content and form of reports are issued each year.

Programs/Positions
The Virginia Assessment Group (VAG) was started in 1987 to discuss issues relating to this subject. The group holds annual conferences.

Indicators and Outcomes
vary by institution and by program area

Instruments
vary by institution and by program area

Teaching-Learning Elements
State guidelines address the need for assessment of student outcomes in general education, as well as major field. The stated purpose of assessment is the improvement of student learning and performance.

Public Reporting
Biennial

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions. Also contains student records from some independent non-profit colleges and some proprietary schools.

Budget
"funds averaging $12 per full-time student were granted to the institutions to implement assessment procedures." (NCHEMS, 2/96)

Regional Accreditation Association
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
Technology is one of four areas of state focus. The degree of focus will vary by institution.

Issues of Note
The SCHEV has issued a report entitled Assessment in Virginia: Guidelines for the Second Decade. These guidelines provide a framework for future directions in assessment policies and practices.

Washington

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Agency
Higher Education Coordinating Board

Original Initiative and Year
Assessment Policy 1989

Policy Analysis

Policy Context

In an effort to encourage assessment and evaluation, the Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) conceived a Master Plan in 1987 "to develop a multi-dimensional program of performance evaluation" for each of its member colleges and universities. This plan "envisioned assessment as a link between two separate but complementary goals: to improve the quality of undergraduate education and to provide needed information about student outcomes to the HECB." The plan was refined and operationalized in 1989 by the HECB in a resolution directing each member four-year institution and community college to follow an evaluation program. The resolution also called for the creation of a subcommittee of the HECB to "continue development of an effective performance evaluation program..."

Policy Type

The 1989 resolution stated the goals of this performance evaluation program differently than the 1987 master plan. According to the resolution, the evaluation program had two complementary goals: "(1) to provide a means for institutional self-evaluation and improvement, and (2) to meet the state's need for institutional accountability in order to assure quality in the state's higher education system." This wording reflects the focus in Washington's assessment policy on accountability and quality assurance. In its annual report for 1995, the HECB acknowledged that assessment policies can, and often do, have multiple functions. "This struggle--between assessment as improvement and assessment as accountability--is occurring nationwide and has been termed the 'contraries' or 'contradictions' of assessment (Angelo, 1995; Ewell, 1991)." Washington has made clear its preference for the former function: "[A]ssessment is at present more valuable as an aid to helping institutions continuously improve than as a tool for evaluating them as they existed one or two years ago."

Policy Stage

The first series of assessment reports from the member institutions covered the 1991-1993 biennium. The second reports that followed covered the 1993-1995 biennium. These second

biennial assessment reports have been used to focus attention on "how students learn, how faculty/curricula/institutions help them learn, and what contributes to student learning." The state has documented specific examples of how assessment has already been, and can continue to be, an "aid to policy." Thus, Washington has completed two cycles of implementation and evaluation, and presumably will conclude its third biennium in 1997.

State Guidelines

The following components are expected to be incorporated by each four-year and community college systems' performance evaluation programs: collection of entry-level baseline data; intermediate assessment of quantitative and writing skills, and other appropriate intermediate assessment as determined by the institution; end of program assessment; post-graduate assessment of the satisfaction of alumni and employers; and periodic program review.

Programs/Positions

In the Board's 1989 Resolution refining the performance evaluation program, the board agreed to appoint a subcommittee to work with staff and institutional representatives to continue development of the performance evaluation program.

Indicators and Outcomes

Writing and quantitative skills, alumni and employer satisfaction are mandated outcomes arenas. The manner in which these are measured is left to the discretion of the community college system and the individual four-year public institutions.

Instruments

Upon recommendation of 1987 Master plan, "Building a System", the Higher Education Coordinating Board piloted three nationally-normed tests (College Measures Program, Academic Profile, and Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency) and decided they were not the best tools to assess the quality of undergraduate education, in particular the targeted academic skills -- communication, computation and critical thinking. Following this pilot effort, individual institutions were encouraged to develop their own assessment tools and tests.

Teaching-Learning Elements

There is a clear commitment at the Board and institutional levels to assessment of the attainment of writing and quantitative skills. The 1995 Assessment Report notes means by which institutions have been using assessment to understand and improve the teaching/learning process.

Public Reporting

Annual Report expected from six public four-year institutions and State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. The State Higher Education Coordinating Board publishes its own annual assessment report which is a compilation of findings from across the institutions, including an overall evaluation of the state of assessment.

Database

Statewide database exists but is not comprehensive.

Budget

State funding for assessment has been available since the 1989-91 biennium when $400,000 was given for assessment activities at each of the six, four-year institutions and to the State Board for Community Colleges. In 1990 supplemental funds of $60,000 per institution was given to the 27 community colleges. total funding levels for public four-years, community colleges and technical institutions have remained relatively constant for each successive biennium budget. The Community Colleges and Technical System Governing Board has funding to coordinate assessment activities while the Higher Education Coordinating Board does not.

Regional Accreditation Association

Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship

not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation

not evident

Technology Focus

Not evident

West Virginia

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State Agency
State College and University Systems of West Virginia

Original Initiative and Year
Assessment Policy 1989

Policy Analysis

Policy Context and Type

Systemic assessment efforts began in West Virginia in 1987, when the West Virginia Board of Regents created a Task Force on Assessment. This task force established general guidelines for institutional assessment activities. West Virginia's institutions developed assessment plans in response to the task force. In 1989, West Virginia's Board of Regents split into two governing boards--one for the State University System and one for the State College System. Both of these boards passed resolutions in 1989 recommending that "[E]ach public college and university is urged to develop a five-year comprehensive assessment program which is compatible with its mission and educational objectives." Thus, assessment of student learning is essentially done only at the institutional level. In 1992, legislation was passed requiring the system offices to issue institutional "report cards." Institutional report cards suggest an emphasis on accountability. Legislation passed in 1995 reaffirmed the report card legislation. Most recently, in 1996, the State University and State College Systems adopted plans based on eight principles consistent with the purpose of public higher education in the state and how these principles inform the assessment of general education and academic programs. (The eight principles are listed below.) These plans, consisting of numerous initiatives, are currently being implemented. These initiatives focus on quality assurance and reform.

State Guidelines

The most recent legislation, Senate Bill 547, which was passed in 1995, requires both of the governing boards to prepare institutional, as well as system-wide, report cards. The 1996 System Plans of the State University and State College Systems call for a variety of assessment activities designed to fulfill the eight principles derived from the purpose of higher education in the state. These eight principles are (1) preparing for life's work; (2) increasing educational opportunities and standards; (3) partnering for quality and efficiency; (4) measuring by results; (5) transforming education through technology; (6) rewarding strategic change; (7) supporting

faculty and staff to drive strategic change; and (8) seeking additional resources through partnerships.

Programs/Positions
The 1987 Regents' Task Force on Assessment was reconfigured and renamed the West Virginia Higher Education Council on Assessment in 1989. In response to the recommendations of this Assessment Council, assessment committees were created on most campuses.

Indicators and Outcomes
Indicators vary across all of the initiatives for each of the principles. Examples include alumni surveys, basic skills testing, and nationally-standardized achievement tests.

Instruments
No

Teaching-Learning Elements
not evident

Public Reporting
Periodic

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions.

Budget
According to NCHEMS (2/96), "West Virginia governing boards have allocated approximately $15,000 annually for state-wide assessment programs and materials. However, the primary responsibility for funding assessment activity has been borne by the campuses."

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship
not evident

Disciplinary Accreditation
not evident

Technology Focus
Principle Five in the System Plan directly addressed "transforming education through technology." The goal is to "[B]ecome a national leader in using technology to enhance access to learning and to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of education."

Wisconsin

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State Agency
The University of Wisconsin System

Original Initiative and Year
Accountability Policy 1993

Policy Analysis

Policy Context and Type

Assessment became a major issue in Wisconsin in the summer of 1992, when the Governor's Commission on University of Wisconsin (UW) Compensation recommended that a task force should be created to look into establishing accountability measures for the public university system. This Assessment Task Force, in 1993, announced its recommendation that the UW System should adopt accountability measures, and that these measures should fall into seven broad areas: (1) access; (2) quality; (3) effectiveness; (4) efficiency; (5) diversity; (6) stewardship of assets; (7) contribution to compelling state needs. Further, the commission recommended that specific performance indicators should be used to measure accountability. In the report of the Accountability Task Force, the objectives of this policy were clearly stated: (1) "To enable our stakeholders to know what we are achieving with our resources;" and (2) "To encourage continuous improvement in serving our many different kinds of clients, using appropriate feedback mechanisms." The Task Force also recommended that "there be consequences for failing to act to meet the accountability goals and rewards for special efforts which lead to success in meeting the goals." This gives the policy a distributive component.

In addition to the accountability policy, the UW system has an ongoing program of quantitative measurements, called the Academic Quality Program (AQP). The AQP includes "annual publications of the Statistical Profile and regular surveys of students and/or alumni, business and/or industry, the general Wisconsin public, and UW System faculty members." The AQP calls on the UW System to continue the assessment of students' verbal and quantitative skills, refine the techniques and report annually on the use of assessment results in the improvement of teaching and learning." (Resolution 6215, adopted 9/11/92)

Policy Stage

It is not clear from the state documents how far along Wisconsin is in implementing its

systemwide accountability measures.

State Guidelines
"Once a set of core indicators is established and baseline data are available for each of the indicators, the UW System Board of Regents should evaluate the data and set performance goals related to each indicator." (1993 Task Force Report) Results of accountability measures should be provided to the Governor and Legislature in "report card" form. Finally, the Regents "should periodically reconvene a public/private sector task force to review the progress made and recommend changes as appropriate." (1993 Task Force Report)

Programs/Positions
The Governor's Task Force on UW Accountability Measures was impaneled to make recommendations related to assessment, and issued its final report in 1992.

Indicators and Outcomes
Student, alumni, and employer surveys, faculty share of undergraduate instruction, research funding at doctoral institutions, sophomore competency tests, graduation rate, post-graduation experience, credits-to-degree, state funding for instruction-related activities, rates of admission and access for state high school graduates, hiring, retention, and tenure rates of women and minority faculty and staff, minority student enrollment and graduation rates, reporting and resolution of sexual harassment complaints, faculty retention and development, facilities maintenance, workplace safety, continuing education/extension enrollment.

Instruments
See indicators/outcomes.

Teaching-Learning Elements
Some of the indicators address teaching and learning elements. The Academic Quality Program (AQP) deals more directly with teaching and learning issues.

Public Reporting
3-yr cycle

Database
Comprehensive statewide database exists at the SHEEO level, containing student records from four-year and two-year public institutions.

Budget
not evident

Regional Accreditation Association
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Regional Accreditation Association Relationship

The AQP, in particular, was designed "with special emphasis on meeting the North Central Association's accreditation guidelines for assessment."

Disciplinary Accreditation

not evident

Technology Focus

none evident

Wyoming

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Receipt of information is pending.

APPENDIX B
Regional Accreditation Association Assessment Policy Analysis

BENCHMARKING ASSESSMENT

Assessment of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education for Improvement & Public Accountability: State Governing, Coordinating Board & Regional Accreditation Association Policies and Practices

Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges
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Assessment Timeline

December 1985	Standards for Outcomes Assessment adopted
December 1989	Task force on Outcomes Assessment formed
November 1990	*Framework for Outcomes Assessment* published, intended to help institutions design, initiate, and conduct effective outcomes assessment programs.
February 1994	Rev. edition of *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Standards for Accreditation* (previous editions in 1957, 1971, 1978, 1982, 1988, 1989)
June 1994	Second Task force on Outcomes Assessment formed
1995	Outcomes Assessment Survey of 495 member institutions conducted
February 1996	Commission's first Policy Statement on Outcomes Assessment draft circulated for approval
July 1996	Second edition of *Framework for Outcomes Assessment* published
July 1996	Report on the 1995 Outcomes Assessment Survey published
October 1996	First of seven symposia on outcomes assessment for member institutions throughout the Middle States region scheduled for October at Temple University
April 1997	Seventh symposium completed the series

Overview of MSA/CHE Assessment for Learning/Teaching Improvement

One of Middle States sixteen standards for accreditation states that the Commission determines an institution's accreditation by evidence of "policies and procedures, qualitative and quantitative, as appropriate, which lead to the effective assessment of institutional, program, and student learning outcomes." The association's *Framework* is based on the major precepts of

Characteristics of Excellence which addresses institutional effectiveness and outcomes assessment in the context of accreditation. The *Characteristics* states that "institutions should develop guidelines and procedures for assessing their overall effectiveness as well as student learning outcomes" (p. 16). According to first edition (1990) of the *Framework* the insistence that the improvement of teaching and learning is the primary goal of outcomes assessment follows directly from the *Characteristics of Excellence*, which states, the "ultimate goal of outcomes assessment is the improvement of teaching and learning" (p. 17).

The 1996 edition of *Framework* was designed to assist colleges and universities in meeting outcomes assessment requirements of MSA/CHE and is also "designed to enable them to respond to new expectations being expressed in public forums" (p. 1). The emphasis is now dual - enhancing the effectiveness in terms of teaching and learning **and** the effectiveness of the institution as a whole.

Middle States has made a clear commitment to engaging their member institutions in exploring questions of student learning - what they should learn and how well they are doing it. An institution is effective when it is asking these questions and doing something with the answers they find.

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1. Resource Materials to Guide Institutions

Framework (1996) is designed as a tool for assisting institutions in their design, initiation, and conduct of outcomes assessment programs and it includes a bibliography of assessment resources.

The 1996 Report on the 1995 Outcomes Assessment Survey indicated that 57% of institutions in the region did not have an institution-wide assessment plan. It further identified nine aspects of assessment which should be completed in order to set the stage for developing a plan. Based on these findings from the 1995 Outcomes Assessment Survey the Commission has planned to sponsor as many seminars as possible to assist institutions with completing the nine preliminary steps for developing a plan; collegially developing a plan on campus, the continuous administration of assessment plans, and post-assessment strategies (how to use the assessment findings). Other recommendations generated from the findings of the survey include more explicit information sharing with Chairs and members of evaluation teams around issues of the Commission's assessment expectations, institutional progress, and how to evaluate realistically what institutions might be expected to do in the five years between an evaluation visit and the following periodic review report.

As of October 1996 Training Programs for member institutions were instituted.

2. Emphasis on Students/Student Learning

Framework emphasizes teaching and student learning. "...a campus-wide assessment program is essential to document student academic achievement" (p. 19) and the "ultimate purpose of assessment is to improve teaching and learning" (p. 14). It asks each institution to address the following questions: What should students learn? How well are they learning it? How does the institution know? Institutional effectiveness is linked to extent and quality of student learning

1996 Policy Statement indicates that institutions must give primary attention to assessment of student learning outcomes.

3. Kinds of Outcomes Measured/Assessment Processes
Commission does not and will not prescribe methodologies or specific approaches, but there is a clear expectation that the assessment of student learning outcomes is an ongoing institutional process.

In deciding what to measure, 3 areas of focus were identified: general education, other academic programs, and individual course offerings. Within these three areas cognitive abilities, information literacy, student integration and application by students of their knowledge and skills acquired via program offerings are highlighted.

Means of possible measurement include proxy measures. For example, to measure a student's sense of social responsibility, a proxy measure might be their participation in volunteer organizations. Direct assessment of student learning, a value-added approach using portfolios as an approach is also mentioned. Quantitative and qualitative approaches are suggested, as well as the use of both local and standardized instruments.

"Student outcomes assessment is the act of assembling, analyzing and using both qualitative and quantitative evidence of teaching and learning in outcomes in order to examine their congruence with stated purposes and educational objectives and to provide meaningful feedback that will stimulate self-renewal" (Framework, 1996, p. 14)

Methods of assessment which complement cognitive tests and provide indicators of instructional program quality are listed on page 28: course and professor evaluations; student satisfaction inventories; measures of student personal and affective development; retention numbers, faculty peer evaluations, alumni achievements. "Most campuses have found that longitudinal, multi-measure studies produce more meaningful results..." (p.18)

A broad framework for linking purposes, resources and educational outcomes includes: general education, the major, basic skills, and students' personal and social development. The general education arena includes abilities underlying the transfer of knowledge by the ability to think critically, solve problems, effectively communicate in written and oral form, display technological competence, have familiarity with mathematics and quantitative analysis, and a range of characteristics indicative of sound judgment and human values (p. 35). "The analysis of student achievement with respect to general education utilizes different measurement objectives for assessing competencies in four broad areas: cognitive abilities (critical thinking, problem solving), content literacy (knowledge of social institutions, science and technology), competence in information management skills and communication, and value awareness (multicultural understanding, moral and ethical judgment)" (p. 35-36). In the major, students should be able to demonstrate their ability to integrate their learning.

4. Emphasis on Teaching

Teaching is clearly a part of the assessment/improvement loop. It seems to be a tool to respond to student learning. Teaching itself is not clearly an object of assessment. *Framework* indicates the primacy of teaching and learning and includes a diagram linking learning, teaching, assessment and institutional improvement.

The section on Assessment for Improvement discusses applying assessment findings to improve student learning in the classroom and throughout the curriculum as a whole (p.9): findings might lead faculty to pursue curriculum development, pedagogical changes, faculty development initiatives, and the reallocation of resources (p. 11). "Assessment programs should reflect a variety of methods for assessing instructional quality, including traditional and contemporary cognitive tests and other methods of assessment" (p. 28).

5. Emphasis on Institutional Effectiveness/Accountability

The primary goals of outcomes assessment are to "document institutional, programmatic, course-level and individual student success in achieving stated goals" (Framework, 1990). The language used speaks to excellence and using assessment results to plan for improvement. Framework 1990 refers to *Characteristics of Excellence* section entitled "Outcomes and Institutional Effectiveness", which begins with: "the deciding factor in assessing the effectiveness of any institution is evidence of the extent to which it achieves its goals and objectives".

The 1996 edition emphasizes accountability and identifies as the ultimate goal of outcomes assessment the examination and enhancement of institutional effectiveness. "Four objectives must be met in order to reach this goal. They are to improve teaching and learning, to contribute to the personal development of students, to ensure institutional improvements, **and to facilitate accountability**. The 1996 edition has a section on the "Current Context" which discusses the intense pressures institutions now face to demonstrate "their accountability, effectiveness and efficiency" (to constituents, the public, parents, legislators, etc.).

6. Emphasis on Planning by Institution/Institutional Autonomy

While outcomes assessment is one of the standards for accreditation adopted by Middle States, the Commission "believes it is an institution's prerogative to determine how best to implement assessment. In addition, institutions conceptualize, develop, and implement their outcomes assessment plans over time"(*Framework*, 1996).

7. Relationship to Higher Education State Department/Councils/Coordinating Boards

MSA/CHE has participated in informal discussions with the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education and with New Jersey's Excellence and Accountability Committee to update them on CHE's activities and to discuss common concerns and ways to address them effectively.

8. Training of Accrediting Teams

Findings from 1995 Outcomes Assessment Survey indicated the need for training of chairs and members of evaluation teams on issues of assessment. Accordingly, training/development workshops for team chairs and evaluators is being planned for the fall 1997.

9. Diversity

Multicultural understanding is identified as a desired competency in the general education arena. (p. 36, 1996 Framework). *Characteristics of Excellence* (1994) includes as a characteristic of excellence

programs and courses which develop among other abilities the ability to interact effectively in a culturally diverse world (p. 4). Admissions programs should encourage diversity in the student population (p. 8) and student services should be broad enough to meet the special needs of a diverse student body (p. 9)

An environment in which cross-cultural understanding flourishes is essential (p. 10). Institutional working environments should be characterized by justice, equity, and respect for diversity and human dignity (p. 12). Faculty selection should include goals of achieving diversity in areas of race, ethnicity, gender and age (p. 11)

10. Technology

The development of information management skills and information literacy is mentioned in a list of desired outcomes.

11. Evaluation of Assessment

The "Guiding Principles for College Assessment" (Framework, 1996) includes the expectation that "assessment programs include research and analyses on the effects of the assessments upon institutions, students, and the teaching and learning process" (p. 29). The Association itself has assessed its progress with regard to assessment via their 1995 survey of their member institution's assessment practices.

12. Formative or Summative?

In 1990 Framework the Association asked its member institutions to emphasize formative assessment.

In 1996 the updated Framework speaks of institutions utilizing 2 evaluation strategies--formative and summative (p. 7&8), acknowledging the "growing significance of accountability-oriented (summative) assessment for public policy and other purposes" (p.11).

13. Who is involved in assessment?

Assessment is ideally seen as a partnership among faculty, administrators and students.

Materials Received

1. 1990 Framework for Outcomes Assessment
2. 1994 Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Standards for Accreditation
3. 1996 Policy Statement on Outcomes Assessment
4. 1996 Framework for Outcomes Assessment (Rev. Ed.)
5. 1996 Report on the 1995 Outcomes Assessment Survey

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Assessment Timeline

1992	Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness
1992	Standards for Accreditation give greater emphasis to assessment
April 1997	Student Outcomes Assessment Project Institutional Survey
Summer 1997	Analysis of survey responses
December 1997	Report on survey findings at annual association workshop
1998 - future	Design of annual forums and publications to assist institutions with student outcomes assessment

Overview of NEASC Assessment for Teaching/Learning Improvement

The Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness explicitly discusses assessment and emphasizes that "an institution's efforts and ability to assess its effectiveness and use the obtained information for its improvement are important indicators of institutional quality." The teaching and learning process is the primary focus of assessment. The association Evaluation Manual states that "one institutional goal of NEASC's effectiveness criteria is to cultivate within an institution a habit of inquisitiveness about its effectiveness with a corollary commitment to making meaningful use of the results of that curiosity". According to the Background Paper used in training evaluation team members on issues of assessment, "the assessment of an institution's effectiveness carefully differentiates between what graduates know and what the institution has done to enable them to learn."

With regard to institutional effectiveness and assessment the Commission's expectations are fourfold:

1) the Commission expects the institution to determine that it has taken cognizance of the need to engage in such efforts;
2) the Commission expects the institution will have in place or have constructed realistic plans to put in place assessment mechanisms;
3) the Commission expects that the institution will utilize the results/findings of assessment efforts to inform the decision-making processes; and
4) the Commission expects that these efforts will occur on an on-going basis and that they will become increasingly systematic, integrated and holistic (Self-Study Guide, 1994).

1. Resource Materials to Guide Institutions

Evaluators and team chairs are trained on issues of assessment. Training includes use of Background Paper, Planning and Evaluation Session. CIHE does offer fall self-study workshops for all institutions preparing for a comprehensive evaluation within the next two years. One of the intended outcomes of the Student Outcomes Assessment Project is the development of training materials and workshops to assist member institutions in their assessment processes and practices.

2. Emphasis on Students/Student Learning

According to the Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness (1992), "assessment's primary focus is the teaching-learning experience. To the greatest extent possible, therefore, the institutions would describe explicit achievements expected of its students and adopt reliable procedures for assessing these achievements.

Self study manual suggests that documents that serve as examples of institutional studies of learning outcomes be included in those materials gathered and made available to the evaluation team during their campus visit. According to Standard 2.5, information gathered should inform institutional planning especially as it relates to student achievement Standard 4.38 holds that evaluation of student learning or achievement be based upon clearly stated criteria and Standard 10.7 states that institutions are expected to have documentation for any statements/promises regarding learning outcomes.

3. Kinds of Outcomes Measured/Assessment Processes

Outcomes

While the association mandates no specific means of assessing institutional effectiveness, student learning or achievement, or teaching, nor any specific desired outcomes, it does acknowledge that for institutions which measure their effectiveness there are three domains in which they are influential: cognitive, behavioral, and affective learning.

Processes

Documents indicate that outcomes must be clearly stated and that successful efforts will be both qualitative and quantitative. The process should be on-going and incremental. Standard 10.7 states that the institution is expected to have documentation for any statements/promises regarding program excellence, learning outcomes, etc. The Background Paper used for training evaluators lists direct and indirect measures of student learning which have been found to be reliable. They include capstone experiences, portfolio assessment, performance or licensure exams, essay questions scored by outside departments, alumni surveys, and job placement statistics.

4. Emphasis on Teaching

Evaluation Manual speaks more of what not to do (i.e., sitting in on classes will not provide adequate evidence of teaching effectiveness); that it would be better to look at outcomes data (which is not defined) in self study and other evidence presented by the institution.

Standard 4.30: The institution endeavors to enhance the quality of teaching. It encourages experimentation with methods to improve instruction. The effectiveness of instruction is periodically and systematically assessed using adequate and reliable procedures. The results are used to improve instruction.

5. Emphasis on Institutional Effectiveness/Accountability
The Commission identifies institutional effectiveness and accountability as dual purposes/major themes of accreditation (Standards and Evaluation Manual). Assessment and accreditation share the common goal of enabling institutions to reach their full academic potential. Accreditation provides quality assurance and encourages institutions on an ongoing basis to work to increase their effectiveness.

6. Emphasis on Planning by Institution/Institutional Autonomy
Stresses in Policy Statement that Commission will/does not prescribe an assessment formula. Successful assessments efforts are compatible with the institution's mission and its available resources.

7. Relationship to Higher Education State Department/Councils/Coordinating Board
State departments of higher education in states within the Commission's region are notified annually of institutions being evaluated by the Commission and often a staff member of the department accompanies the NEASC accreditation team as an observer.

8. Training of Accrediting Teams
Training exists and the Student Outcomes Assessment Project is intended to further develop this service.

9. Diversity
Standard 6.2 in student services area mentions that cocurricular services should adhere to both the spirit and intent of equal opportunity and the institution's own goals for diversity.

10. Technology
Standard 7.1: availability of library and information resources (e.g. computer centers) and institution ensures that students use these resources as an integral part of their education.

Standard 7.6: regular and systematic evaluation of adequacy and utilization of library and information resources is expected as is the use of this information to improve effectiveness.

11. Evaluation of Assessment
According to the Evaluation Manual, the institution should be able to demonstrate that it uses the results of the evaluation of outcomes to enhance the delivery of its services. Additionally, a goal of effectiveness criteria is to develop institutional capacity to verify that it is achieving its purpose. The Student Outcomes Assessment Project is the association's emerging effort to determine the extent of assessment activity and how the association can be of greater assistance facilitating outcomes assessment on their members' campuses.

12. Formative of Summative

The approach appears to be both as assessment data will be collected and used to assure both quality and self-improvement

13. Who is involved in assessment?

According to Standard Two, planning and evaluation are systematic, broad based, interrelated, and appropriate to the institution's circumstances. They involve the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes.

Materials Received

1. 1992 Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness
2. 1992 Standards for Accreditation
3. 1994 Self Study Guide
4. June 26, 1996 letter from Charles Cook
5. March 13, 1997 letter from Peggy Maki
6. Background paper, Planning and Evaluation Session, New Evaluators' Workshop
7. Draft of letter to institutions regarding Student Outcomes Assessment Project
8. Survey on Enhancing Institutional Effectiveness through Student Outcomes Assessment (draft 3/13/97)
9. 1996 Policy Manual

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Assessment Timeline

October 1989	Statement on the Assessment of Student Academic Achievement (ASAA)
March 1990	Annual NCA Meeting includes special program to discuss implications of assessment initiative
June 1990	Commission approves comprehensive educational plan to implement the Statement on the ASAA
Fall 1990	NCA Quarterly, *Sharpening the Focus on Assessment: The Regionals and the NCA States*", reports on the beginning of NCA's assessment initiative
Spring 1991	4 regional meetings held focusing on "Documenting Student Academic Achievement within the Context of Accreditation"
Fall 1991	NCA Quarterly, *Assessing Student Academic Achievement*, a progress report on the Commission's assessment initiative
August 1993	Revision of the Statement of the Assessment of Student Academic Achievement
September 1994	Handbook of Accreditation publishes including Chapter 14: *Special Focus: Assessing Student Academic Achievement*
June 1995	Deadline for all NCA institutions to submit plan for assessing student academic achievement
February 1996	Revision of Statement on ASSA
March 1996	Majority of institutional assessment plans reviewed by consultant -evaluators
March 1996	*Opportunities for Improvement: Advice from Consultant-Evaluators on Programs to Assess Student Learning*, NCA Staff paper by Cecilia Lopez, provides information on the impact and expectations of the assessment initiative as culled from the institutional plans

March 1996 — Working draft of revised sections of Handbook of Accreditation published. Criteria Three and Four which cover assessment of SAA set much more explicit expectations that assessment for student academic achievement as an "essential component of evaluating overall institutional effectiveness"

Overview of NCA Assessment for Learning/Teaching Improvement

NCA has 5 Criteria for Accreditation. Numbers Three and Four emphasize the use of assessment in evaluating and improving teaching and learning at member institutions. Criteria Three states that the institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes. Criteria Four states that the institution can continue to accomplish it purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness. According to the most recent Statement on Assessment of Student Academic Achievement (February 1996) which is embedded in Criteria Three, the evaluation of overall institutional effectiveness continues to be an essential part of the accreditation process. This Statement reaffirms the Commission position taken October 1989, and repeated in August 1993, that assessing student academic achievement is an essential component of evaluating overall institutional effectiveness.

Of the six regional accrediting associations, NCA has one of the most explicit statements of assessment of student learning and recognition of the link between assessing learning and strengthening teaching. The Association has required all member institutions to submit assessment plans. Those plans have been evaluated and an overall evaluation of the current status of assessment across the region has been made.

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1. Resource Materials to Guide Institutions

Regional meetings were first held in spring 1991 to train institution staff and evaluators. Meetings included distribution of Assessment workbook and brief papers from presenters. The papers from the spring workshops are published in Fall 1991 NCA Quarterly and the papers include introduction to assessment of student academic achievement as addressed by the Commission (e.g., *Characteristics of an Assessment Program*, a framework to guide design of institutional assessment program); practical advice (e.g., *A Worksheet to Judge Inclusion of Assessment Data for Accreditation*); and institutional case studies from NCA member institutions.

1994-1996 Handbook of Accreditation includes Appendices of selected readings on assessment.

101st (1996) NCA Annual Meeting included assessment resources for institutions (contact list of member institutions willing to share examples of institutional plans and programs, suggested publications, selected organizations and instruments).

2. Emphasis on Students/Student Learning

The ultimate goal of assessment is the improvement of student learning. Of all the possible outcomes institutions might pursue/study as a means of documenting institutional effectiveness, none are required except for outcomes documenting student academic achievement.

According to the 1989 Statement on the ASAA, "the Commission wants to make clear that all institutions are expected to assess the achievement of their students. With this statement we make explicit the Commission's position that student achievement is a critical component in assessing overall institutional effectiveness. Our expectation is that an institution has and is able to describe a program by which it documents student academic achievement".

3. Kinds of Outcomes Measured/Assessment Processes

NCA states that implicit in the values of higher education is the mastery of a rigorous body of knowledge and students' abilities to conceptualize, analyze, and integrate; use their intellect; examine their values; consider divergent views; and engage with their peers and teachers in the exchange of ideas and attitudes. These values, however, never appear as a list of desired outcomes to be measured. The Working Draft of revised sections of Criteria Three and Four notes that "an appropriate assessment program will **document** (their emphasis) proficiency in skills and competencies essential for all college-educated adults; completion of an identifiable and coherent undergraduate level general education component; and mastery of the level of knowledge appropriate to the degree attained".

Additionally in the 1996 Lopez paper, *Opportunities for Improvement: Advice from Consultant-Evaluators on Programs to Assess Student Learning,* sharing advice from consultant-evaluators on assessing student learning, "evaluators recommend that every academic department or other academic unit determine the extent to which it actually contributes to the incremental learning of its students within the three domains: cognitive, behavioral, or affective".

There is an explicit expectation that data from multiple, direct and indirect indicators such as pre- and post-testing, portfolio assessments, alumni and employer surveys will be collected, and that multiple data collection methods will be used. **Note, however, that no explicit list of outcomes or indicators of academic achievement are provided.**

4. Emphasis on Teaching

All publications explicitly link the assessment of learning with the strengthening of teaching. The 1993 and 1996 Statements assert that "the program to assess student learning should emerge from and be sustained by a faculty and administrative commitment to excellent teaching and effective learning. The assessment initiative was conceived of as a means by which to encourage excellence in the teaching provided students (1993 and 1996 Statements). In both 1993 and 1996 Criteria 3 emphasizes that for assessment to have any real impact on higher education it must directly link student achievement to both the structure and content of the educational program and to the effectiveness of teaching. It is not clear how excellence in teaching is assessed.

5. Emphasis on Institutional Effectiveness/Accountability

The accreditation process is presented as a means of providing public assurance of an institution's effectiveness and a stimulus to institutional improvement.

6. Emphasis on Planning by Institution/Institutional Autonomy

NCA neither provides a definition of student academic achievement nor prescribes a specific approach to assessment. The only mandate NCA has is that while institutions might utilize a

number of institutional outcomes in documenting their effectiveness, all institutions must have and describe a program which documents student academic achievement.

7. Relationship to State Department/Council/Coordinating Boards
NCA maintains communications and discussions with officers of state governing and coordinating boards. In 1990 and 1996 NCA surveyed the state higher education agencies of the nineteen states in their region, asking states about their expectations for assessment and their awareness of NCA's initiative assessing student academic achievement; and requesting suggestions for ways in which the states and NCA might work together to link their expectations for assessment.

8. Training of Accrediting Teams
Evaluators were included in 1991 regional workshops introducing Commission's commitment to assessing for student academic achievement.

9. Diversity
According to the "Characteristics of an Assessment Program" found in NCA Quarterly, Fall 1991, an assessment program must not restrict or inhibit goals of access, equity, and diversity established by the institution".

In August 1991 the Commission published a Statement on Access, Equity, and Diversity which includes the statement that "the Commission expects an institution to create and maintain a teaching and learning environment that supports sensitivity to diverse individuals and groups;...discourages acts of racism, sexism, bigotry, harassment, and violence while it teaches students and faculty alike to see in proper perspective the differences that separate and the commonalties that bind all peoples and cultures".

10. Technology
Criteria 2 expects institutions to have academic resources and equipment adequate to support institutions' purposes (includes libraries, electronic services and products).

11. Evaluation of Assessment
NCA stated in the NCA Quarterly, Fall 1991 that institutions should include a process for evaluating the assessment program. The Commission is engaged in an evaluation process of how institutions are doing as indicated by the 1996 Lopez paper which provided an overview of where institutions are in their assessment planning and the kinds of advice evaluators-consultants have for institutions based on a review of the institutional assessment plans submitted as of June 1995.

12. Formative/Summative
"Assessment is not an end in itself, but a means of gathering information that can be used in evaluating the institution's ability to accomplish its purposes" (1989 Statement).

13. Who is Involved in Campus Assessment?

NCA holds that a faculty role in and responsibility for the assessment plan is integral to improved student learning. Additionally the importance of institution-wide support of the assessment activities from such entities as the governing board, senior executive officers, president/chancellor is considered essential for ensuring the long-range success of the assessment of student learning.

Materials Received

1. June 26, 1996 letter from Patricia Thrash, Executive Director (retired as of December 1996)
2. NCA Commission on Institutions of Higher Education Briefings (several)
3. State Agency Expectations for Assessment in the North Central Region: A Followup on the 1990 Survey by Patricia Thrash and Leonilia Nakutis (draft 6/25/96)
4. 101st Annual Meeting Program and List of Meeting Resources on Assessment
5. Working Draft of Revised Sections of the Handbook of Accreditation: Criteria Three and Four (March 1996)
6. NCA Quarterly, 65(2), Fall 1990
7. NCA Quarterly, 66(2), Fall 1991
8. Handbook of Accreditation 1994-1996

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Assessment Timeline
currently not available

Overview of NWASC Assessment for Learning/Teaching Improvement
Accreditation Handbook lists 12 Standards for self-study. The Standard most explicitly related to assessment is Standard Five: Educational Program and Its Effectiveness. Within that, Standard 5B: Educational Program Planning and Assessment states that "educational program planning is based on regular and continuous assessment of programs in light of the needs of the disciplines, the fields or occupations for which programs prepare students, and other constituencies of the institution" (1996 Standards). Standard 5B1 notes that institutional assessment programs must be clearly defined, regular, and integrated into institution planning and evaluation mechanisms. Standard 5B3 requires institutions to provide evidence that their assessment activities lead to improvement of teaching and learning.

NWASC has as a policy statement listed in 1994 Accreditation Handbook Policy 25: Educational Assessment which requires institutions to adopt an "assessment scheme" which is in line with their mission and purposes, assesses outcomes, and guides their institutional planning processes.

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1. Resource Materials to Guide Institutions
Policy 25 gives illustrative, not prescriptive, examples of outcome measures (e.g. writing, quantitative skills) and assessment processes (e.g., alumni surveys, student satisfaction inventories).

Other materials which provided evidence of how association supports institutions in their assessment activities or trains evaluators for examining assessment practices of institutions not in evidence.

2. Emphasis on Students/Student Learning
Standard Nine (1996) focuses on students, yet the Standard categories focus primarily on student services and programs. Under Academic Credit and Records - Standard 9.C, evaluation of

student learning or achievement is mentioned as being based on "clearly stated and distinguishable criteria".

Policy 25 states that educational effectiveness is defined in terms of the change it brings about in students. The background description in the 1994 edition of the handbook notes a shift from assessment practices which used process measures and input measures toward an appreciation of "the validity and usefulness of using output evaluations and assessment, as well as input measures in attempting to assess educational quality" (p. 179). Outcome assessment is as of this edition viewed as an essential component of the self-study process. (Have no prior documents in hand from which to gain perspective).

3. Kinds of Outcomes Measured/Assessment Processes

Outcomes

As of the 1996 updated standards, clearer expectations are drawn that institutions will have clearly defined processes for assessing educational programs and that expected learning outcomes for their degree and certification programs will be published. In the introduction to 1996 Standard 5 it is stated that, "the institutions offer collegiate level programs that culminate in identified student competencies..." (p. 16). The association, however, does not identify or mandate what those competencies might or should be.

1994 Handbook includes **suggested** questions for appraising student learning, which mention looking for evidence of student growth in: problem solving, analysis, synthesis, making judgments, reasoning, communicating, developing integrity and objectivity. But this list of examples **does not** appear in 1996 revision of the Handbook.

Processes

Required supporting documents for Standard 5: Educational Program Effectiveness include instruments, procedures, and documents demonstrating appraisal of program outcomes as they relate to students (studies of alumni and former students; student satisfaction inventories).

Standard 5B2 requires institutions to publish expected learning outcomes and demonstrate that their students have achieved these outcomes. Additionally institutions must demonstrate that their assessment activities lead to the improvement of teaching and learning.

1996 Standard I: Institutional Mission, Goals, Planning and Effectiveness requires supporting documentation that provides evidence that demonstrates the analysis and appraisal on institutional outcomes.

4. Emphasis on Teaching

Emphasis in the Standards seems more on evaluation of teaching performance and not the learning outcomes which result from teaching. No evident connection drawn between teaching and learning.

Standard VII (1994) asks that in the self study analysis schools consider how teaching performance should be evaluated and institutions are asked for evidence that the criteria they use was known and accepted by both evaluators and faculty being evaluated.

Standard 7.5 (1996) calls for regular and systematic evaluation of faculty performance to assure teaching effectiveness. This Standard asks for evaluation forms used and the resulting summary reports of student evaluations of faculty and courses.

5. Emphasis on Institutional Effectiveness/Accountability
Introduction to Standards (1994) indicates that the standards of accreditation of postsecondary institutions describe conditions and principles which characterize educational effectiveness. The purpose of accreditation is both public accountability and program and institutional improvement.

6. Emphasis on Planning by Institution/Institutional Autonomy
Does not appear to be mentioned or at least not emphasized. There are no explicit directions as how to proceed so one could read into this that there exists considerable institutional autonomy.

7. Relationship with Higher Education State Department/Council/Coordinating Boards
None apparent

8. Training of Accrediting Teams
None apparent

9. Diversity
1994 Affirmative Action Policy is in place urging institutions to develop and apply affirmative action principles. Embedded in Standard Nine: Students is a section on student services that states the institution is expected to foster a supportive learning environment via attention to diverse backgrounds of its students including ethnic, socioeconomic, religious diversity.

10. Technology
From 1994 to 1996 a shift from planning for technology to using technology is evident. The language shifts from planning for deletions/additions in curriculum programs and distance learning initiatives to use of technology "to extend the boundaries in obtaining information" (4B5). In Standard VA8 the expectation that faculty in partnership with library and information resources personnel ensure that the use of library and information resources are integrated into the learning process is stated.

However, in the required documents supporting this section of self-study, the measures focus on adequacy of facilities, holdings, extent of use, but **no clear links** between the use of technology and teaching and/or learning outcomes are mentioned/made.

Standard III: Physical Plant, Materials, and Equipment
in 1994 there is no mention of computers or technology
in 1996 IIIB includes the expectation that suitable equipment, including computers be provided.

Standard IV: Library and Information Sources includes the following expectations (?):
IVA1 (1996) presence of computer centers, networks, and telecommunication centers
IVB2 (1996) use of resources in developing abilities of students
IVB5 (1996) use of technology to "extend the boundaries in obtaining information"
IVE (1996) in planning and evaluation section of this Standard, it is indicated that library and information resources planning activities support the teaching and learning function of the institution.

11. Evaluation of Assessment
Standard 1: Institutional Mission, Goals, Planning and Effectiveness
1B4 calls for the use of evaluation activities to improve instructional programs
1B5 calls for the integration of evaluation and planning processes to identify institutional priorities for improvement

Standard 5B3 (1996) indicates that institutions must demonstrate that its assessment activities lead to improvement of teaching and learning. Standard 5B2 requires institutions to publish expected learning outcomes and demonstrate that heir students have achieved these outcomes. Additionally institutions must demonstrate that their assessment activities lead to the improvement of teaching and learning

But it is not apparent that NWASC is doing anything to gauge the influence of their policies on the assessment practices and policies of the institutions they serve.

12. Formative/Summative?
Assessment is calling for a cycle of improvement, and thus seem more formative in nature.

13. Who is involved in Assessment
Faculty have a central role in planning and evaluating the educational programs (Standard 5B1, 1996).

Documents Received:
1994 Accreditation Handbook
1996 Revised Standards, which will be in 1996 Accreditation Handbook (Fall 1996)
July, 11 1996 letter from Joseph A. Malik, Executive Director

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges
James T. Rogers, Executive Director
Materials received from John Orr Dwyer, Associate Executive Director
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Assessment Timeline

1984 Implementation of Institutional Effectiveness Criteria

Overview of SACS Assessment for Learning/Teaching Improvement

SACS has 6 sections of Criteria for Assessment. Section III, "Institutional Effectiveness" addresses concepts of institutional assessment for instructional practices and learning processes. In order to plan and evaluate the primary educational activities of teaching, research, and public service an institution must: "establish a clearly defined purpose appropriate to collegiate education, formulate educational goals consistent with the institution's purpose; develop and implement procedures to evaluate the extent to which these educational goals are being achieved; and use the results of these evaluations to improve educational programs, services and operations." (p. 20 *Criteria for Accreditation*, 1996). In the Introduction of the *Resource Manual on Institutional Effectiveness*, the inclusion of this criterion is highlighted as "an expansion of the process to emphasize the results of education and to focus on the extent to which the institution uses assessment information to reevaluate goals, to make essential improvements, and to plan for the future" (p. iii).

SACS led the regional associations in its early (1984) adoption of outcomes assessment as tool for measuring institutional effectiveness. While there is no explicit statement of assessment for learning and teaching, a commitment to gauging institutional effectiveness through the assessment of outcomes, including student learning and undergraduate instruction is clear.

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1. Materials to Guide Institutions

Sponsored by a FIPSE grant, SACS has a Resource Manual of Institutional Effectiveness to provide guidelines for interpreting and responding to Section III of Criteria for Accreditation: Institutional Effectiveness. The manual presents philosophy and rationale, an approach to planning and evaluation, and suggestions for managing the process.

2. Emphasis on Students/Student Learning

One of the underlying assumptions shaping the content of the *Resource Manual* is that for a host of publics external to higher education institutions concern for demonstration of how and in what ways colleges and universities are producing "more competent students" is paramount.

Institutions are expected to develop guidelines to evaluate educational effectiveness and mentioned first is concern for the quality of student learning. One of SACS imperatives is that "the institution must evaluate its success with respect to student achievement in relation to purpose, including, as appropriate course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates" (*Criteria for Accreditation*, p. 21).

3. Kinds of Outcomes Measured/Assessment Processes

Outcomes

Course completion, state licensing and job placement rates were identified as possible measures of institutional effectiveness. Other measures of outcomes are provided as examples, not imperatives, on page 9 of *Resource Manual*. Among the examples are student achievement in major field and general education; student affective development; and opinions of program quality given by students, alumni, employers and dropouts.

Processes

Use of both qualitative and quantitative means are encouraged; consistent and systematic means of recording and reporting are emphasized. While processes are not explicitly specified by SACS, an institution , however, "must describe its methods of analyzing".

4. Emphasis on Teaching

Section IV of the Criteria for Accreditation focuses on educational programs. One of the subsections, Section 4.2.4, is on undergraduate instruction and states, "instruction must be evaluated regularly and the results used to ensure quality instruction....Methods of instruction must be appropriate to the goals of each course and the capabilities of the students" (p. 30). Methods of evaluating teaching effectiveness must be varied and may include use of standardized tests and comprehensive examinations, assessment of the performance of graduates in advanced programs or employment, and sampling of the opinions of former students" (p. 31). (These may also be included in kinds of and processes for measuring outcomes.)

5. Emphasis on Institutional Effectiveness/Accountability

Explicit steps are articulated for planning and evaluation processes that are aimed at achieving institutional effectiveness. One of the underlying assumptions shaping the content of the *Resource Manual* is that a host of publics external to higher education institutions are concerned about how and in what ways colleges and universities are producing "more competent students".

6. Emphasis on Planning by Institution/Institutional Autonomy

The *Resource Manual* acknowledges that institutions have diverse purposes and accordingly diverse goals, and so will have diverse methods of obtaining and using evaluative information. That there are no universally appropriate procedures and measures for assessing institutional effectiveness is emphasized, as is recognition that individual institutions will have to choose their own paths and procedures.

7. Relationship to State Department/Council/Coordinating Boards

SACS has a written policy approved by the Commission as of June 1988 regarding the participation of representatives of governing, coordinating, and other state agencies on

Commission visiting committees (p. 104 of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines handbook). This policy states that the institution's governing board must be informed by the institution as to the dates of the committee visit by the Commission on Colleges. The institution should invite a representative of the governing board to be available at the time of the evaluation committee's visit. The policy recommends sharing of institutional self-study and the visiting committee's and institution's response to the committee reports with their state agency.

8. Training of Accrediting Teams
not evident from materials received

9. Diversity
not evident from materials received

10. Technology
Distance learning is included as a section (4.5) in Section IV: Educational Program Criteria and institutions are expected to formulate clear and explicit goals for these programs and be able to demonstrate that they are achieving these goals. The Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines handbook includes a section on Principles of Good Practice for Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs.

Section V: Educational Support Services includes sections on information technology in the library and information technology resources and systems, explicitly demanding evidence of how technology has been integrated into students' experience and evidence of student achievement of basic technology competency.

11. Evaluation of Assessment
Appendix A of *Resource Manual* provides a tool for assessing current practice, and in particular, guidelines for institutions to assess their planning and evaluation procedures. Materials seem to place emphasis on creating a culture of reflection on what institutions are achieving and how they can act on the knowledge. It is not clear whether SACS has engaged in a process of assessing how well its member institutions are fairing with the Criteria for Institutional Effectiveness.

12. Formative/Summative
There is repeated emphasis on using information gained through assessment and evaluation for improvement.

13. Who is Involved in Campus Assessment?
Involvement at all levels is expected. "Presidential leadership is essential to initiate and sustain planning and evaluation efforts" (*Resource Manual*, p.iii). "Institutional leaders have a major role in determining whether planning and evaluation are taken seriously and whether evaluation results are used to make improvements" (p. iv). Expected and desired is a "participatory process involving appropriate representation of constituent groups" (p. 4).

Materials Received

Criteria for Accreditation (1992-1993, 1992-1994, 1996 Editions)
Resource Manual on Institutional Effectiveness (1996)
Policies, Procedures, Guidelines (1996)

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Assessment Timeline

1986-1988	WASC regional dialogue on key elements of institutional quality
1988	Adoption of revised accreditation standards. "One of the major new emphases...was the development of a series of accrediting standards calling on institutions to focus on assessment as a means of assuring institutional and program quality and effectiveness". (WASC Resource Manual)
April 1990	WASC sponsored full-day workshop for Institutional Accreditation Liaison Officers on assessment expectations and techniques
1991	AAHE Assessment Forum program included WASC related workshops
April 1992	Principles of Good Practice, encapsulated in Achieving Institutional Effectiveness Through Assessment: A Resource Manual to Support WASC Institutions is directed to WASC members
February 1995	WASC Task Force Statement on the Purposes of Accreditation (Task Force 1) includes Principle 2c which states that for an institution to be accredited it must demonstrate that is offers degree, credentials and academic credit that meet publicly-stated standards of educational performance. The task force emphasized that with regard to standards in 2c, "our intent was to assure the public that students are actually learning in programs promised by the institutions (not merely "being taught" or "having the opportunity to learn").
April 1995	WASC Task Force Report on the Role of Accreditation in the Assessment of Student Learning and Teaching Effectiveness (Task Force 2)
October 1995	Quality Assurance Systems (QAS) Worksheet: A New Way to Ask Questions published
Spring 1997	California State University-Sacramento assessment-oriented review slated
Fall 1997	Assessment-oriented visit to CSU-Monterey Bay who is using a major focus on student learning and the creation of an "institutional portfolio" for self study process.

1998-2000 Anticipated comprehensive revision of accreditation standards informed by a series of experimental self-studies.

Overview of WASC Assessment for Learning/Teaching Improvement

In 1988 WASC adopted a completely revised set of accreditation standards, emphasizing the use of assessment "as a means to assure institutional and program quality and effectiveness". The language of the documents and the explicitly stated goal of this initiative "is to move toward the creation of a 'culture of evidence' within institutions such that the asking of questions relating to effectiveness of educational programs and support services is ongoing, and appropriate data are collected to respond." (Resource Manual, p. 2). Concomitantly, there needs to be real consciousness about why institutions are collecting evidence; what evidence to collect; and what one is to do with what one has.

Task Force 2 was charged by the Commission to address the role of assessment of student learning and teaching effectiveness in the accreditation process. Their resulting report identifies minimum institutional requirements for assessing student learning and teaching effectiveness, provides examples of integrative questions for the assessment of learning and teaching, and proffers a series of recommendations for further development and support of assessment practices within the Western region.

While emphasizing institutional autonomy, WASC also set clear expectations that its institutions will develop institutional assessment plans, incorporate assessment data in periodic evaluations of the effectiveness of general education program, incorporate assessment techniques into program review techniques, and develop an assessment program to review the co-curricular program of the institution. "The purpose of these fours areas of emphasis over the next several years is to embed assessment into existing institutional structures" (p. 7 Resource Manual).

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1. Resource Materials to Guide Institutions

Achieving Institutional Effectiveness Through Assessment is a resource manual which provides principles of good practices for institutions presenting their assessment plans and findings to the association, and for addressing specific guidelines for four of the association's accrediting standards (institutional effectiveness, evaluation of general education, program review, and cocurricular educational growth) Appendices include information sources on assessment, an example of how the principles of good practice might be applied assessing an appreciation of cultural diversity, and suggested alternative methods to initiate assessment.

April 1995 Task Force 2 report (assessment of teaching and learning effectiveness) provides model questions (examples, not "mandates") for guiding assessment of teaching effectiveness and student learning.

2. Emphasis on Students/Student Learning

Task Force 1 Report "...our intent with 2c, educational performance standards was to assure the public that students are actually learning in the programs promised by the institutions (not merely "being taught" or "having the opportunity to learn").

Task Force 2 Report "supports giving more emphasis to the educational experience of students, anchored in the context of each institution's mission, as an increasingly more central element of the accrediting process".

Task Force 2 lists among it general principles for assessing student learning a set of 7 minimal requirements: information about students' entering characteristics; strategies to provide students requisite skills to pursue the curriculum; mechanisms to monitor students' progress; information about students' academic achievement, including knowledge and skills; basic retention, graduation and time-to-degree information; information about students' post-baccalaureate experiences; and evidence through program review that educational goals are achieved. Questions for Assessment of Student Learning are included in Task Force 2 Report (e.g., Do students acquire core competencies in writing, mathematics, critical thinking, technological literacy in their first years of study?). They are provided as "examples, and should not be construed as mandates".

QAS Worksheet proposes "assessment of learning" as one of three lenses for asking questions about the quality of educational programs. According to Ralph Wolff, Executive Director of WASC, "I've tried to develop a format for asking entirely different questions, questions that are learning-based and assessment-based, rather than resource-based."

3. Kinds of Outcomes Measured/Assessment Processes

Outcomes

Competencies include effective communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and other competencies judged essential by the institution. (Task Force 2 Guiding Principles I. B5a,b

From WASC Standards Assessing Institutional Effectiveness: Standard 4 (Educational Programs) B2: "Undergraduate studies ensure, among other outcomes: (a) competence in written and oral communication; (b) quantitative skills; and (c) the habit of critical analysis of data and argument. In addition to these basic abilities and habits of the mind, goals also include an appreciation of cultural diversity.

Processes

Standard 2C (Institutional Effectiveness) discusses the means for evaluating how well and in what ways an institution is accomplishing its goals. An extensive list of procedures and measures is provided, including such suggestions as structured interviews, focus groups, surveys of recent graduates, change in students' values as measured by standard instruments or self-reporting, and peer evaluation of educational programs.

4. Emphasis on Teaching

Task Force 2, chaired by Pat Cross, cites the need to more meaningfully explore and connect the relationship between teaching effectiveness and student learning. The emphasis on teaching is evident, but so, too, is the acknowledgment that this has been an area which has been overlooked and understudied. This Task Force does offer detailed suggested questions for steering assessment on teaching and notes that for assessing teaching effectiveness and the facilitation of

learning, each institution has at a minimum: qualified and appropriately sized faculty to sustain curriculum, adequate physical resources to support instruction, mechanisms in place for systematic review of teaching, a climate/culture which supports good teaching, and mechanisms to recognize and reward good teaching

5. Emphasis on Institutional Effectiveness/Accountability
The two purposes of accreditation are to provide public assurance with regard to institutional quality and to promote effectiveness and improvement at the institutional level (Task Force 1 Report).

"Task Force 2 agreed with Task Force 1's suggestions that assessment of student learning be part of both public assurance and institutional purposes, but noted that distinguishing between the two in the case of assessment of student learning and teaching effectiveness may be difficult. Task Force 2 believes that the assessment of teaching and learning should be included in the public function of accreditation. The Guiding Principles found in Task Force 2 Report provide the basis of that function. Nevertheless, Task Force 2 believes the overriding spirit of the implementation of these principles is to support institutions and share and encourage good practices".

6. Emphasis on Planning by Institution/Institutional Autonomy
Task Force 2 expresses the conviction that in the final analysis institutions must be responsible for developing their own assessment programs to support their distinctive missions and to provide the information needed for the continuous improvement of their own educational programs, But WASC does establish minimal requirements for assessing student learning and teaching effectiveness. Task Force 2 developed Guiding Principles for the assessment of teaching and learning effectiveness which include the acknowledgment that, "member institutions are in the best position to define their standards for student learning and teaching effectiveness in relationship to their unique circumstance, and member institutions are in the best position to identify measures, strategies, and procedures for assessment of student learning and teaching effectiveness. No single method strategy, model or approach is universally appropriate for assessing teaching and learning".

7. Relationship to Higher Education State Department/Council/Coordinating Boards
not evident from materials received

8. Training of Accrediting Teams
WASC Resource Manual states that "all comprehensive evaluation teams now have at least one member with experience in assessment to review institutional assessment efforts and to work with the evaluation team in searching out evidence in support of institutional assertions of quality. Finally the Commission's assessment initiative has been one of the major areas of emphasis at all self-study workshops and all training workshops for new evaluators, continuing evaluators and team chairs." (p. 8)

9. Diversity
Included among basic outcomes of an undergraduate education is the appreciation of cultural diversity (WASC Standard 4: Educational Programs 4b2). The institution is responsible for

creating and maintaining an environment that is characterized by concern and responsiveness to ethnic, socioeconomic, religious diversity; to special needs of a diverse student body. (Standard 7A: Co-curricular educational growth)

WASC Resource Manual mentions diversity: p. 7 "Assessment techniques can be instrumental in determining the quality of student experience at the institution, particularly for different groups, e.g. racial and ethnic minorities, majority students, or returning adult students". Principles of Good Practice include a reporting of assessment results that reflects " the diversity of the student population and authenticity of individual student experiences" (p.22).

10. Technology
Task Force 2 includes guiding questions that ask whether technology is being effectively utilized in teaching and whether students are acquiring core competencies in technological literacy in their first years of study.

11. Evaluation of Assessment
Task Force 2/1995 Commentary Section of Report indicates "...we recognized that the institutions within the WASC region are already doing a great deal of data collection and assessment activity. Yet, there exists uncertainty and discomfort with current assessment efforts: are we assessing or evaluating the right things; are we using the best methods; are we gaining the maximum value for our assessment activities; can we not learn from one another?

12. Formative or Summative?
Repeated expectation that assessment be used for improving educational practices of institution.

13. Who is Involved in Assessment?
Expectation that faculty of the institution will be directly involved in assessment efforts, establishing assessment goals and determining what questions should be answered (p.6 Resource Manual)

<u>Materials Received</u>
1. Letter in response to our request from Ralph Wolff, Executive Director (dated July 8, 1996)
2. Statement on the Purposes of Accreditation from Task Force 1
3. Report of Task Force 2: The Role of Accreditation in the Assessment of Student Learning and Teaching Effectiveness with attached memorandum from Patricia Cross (April 6, 1995)
4. Quality Assurance Systems Worksheet: A New Way to Ask Questions (DRAFT)
5. Achieving Institutional Effectiveness Through Assessment: A Resource Manual to Support WASC Institutions (April 1992)